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General Information

Journal of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies is a double blind peer reviewed publication. It is an International Journal dedicated to the development of all branches of Social Sciences with special reference to Asian Studies. The Journal accepts theoretical and empirical papers on interdisciplinary studies. The Journal occasionally publishes special issues which mediate on a single topic. It also publishes research notes, reports, book reviews, etc.

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Editorial Note

After a few bouts of rain and storm, winter has set in the city of Kolkata with vengeance, mercury going down to nine degree at many points. People of Kolkata usually enjoy mild winter. For the winter issue of the Journal of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies sixteen papers are selected after going through the usual process of peer review and necessary editing. The volume 7, number 2 has two issues. One, a special issue on the proceedings of the webinar on Women's dialect, held on January 9, 2021; and this one is the regular number of the bimonthly issue of December 2021.

Present number of the Journal begins with the Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji Memorial lecture of this year, delivered by Dr. Udaya Kumar Chakraborty, entitled, 'Origin of the Bengali Language'. Dr. Chakraborty paid homage to late professor Chatterji by discussing largely on Chatterji's contention about Bengali Language. The author has delved into various literatures on the origin of Bengali language from the Indo-Aryan group of languages. He made a critique of the same and had pointed out that Suniti Kumar Chatterji had carefully studied and given a proper understanding of the origin taking example from pre-Aryan languages. This is a very important article where the author has drawn conclusion from modern historical findings on Indo-European concept in order to substantiate Suniti Chatterji's findings.

The article on 'Choices and challenges of consecrated women leadership in Faith Based Organizations in India' by K. Gulam Dasthagir and Shilpita Gine is on case studies of Roman Catholic nuns of the Archdiocese of Kolkata, who are to empower the marginalized women. These women have consecrated their lives for the church. The authors pointed out that though the women studied are in leadership position yet are not free from the grip of patriarchal norms of gender stereotyping.

Samarpita Chatterjee and Roan Mukherjee in their paper, 'Impact of Active and Passive Engagement in Musical Activity on Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Levels of NET/JRF Aspirants during COVID-19 Pandemic', have deliberated on the impact of music on the psychological conditions of candidates aspiring to appear for the said competitive examinations. The authors have used Google forms for the study and analysis was done by statistical methods. It is found that during pandemic of Covid-19, those who were directly or indirectly involved with musical activities had less chance of suffering from depression and anxiety for the uncertainty of the said examination.

Corporeal punishment for socialisation and education of children is an age old phenomena. With the ban on such type of punishment in the schools, new forms have emerged for disciplinary measures in schools in the form of surveillance, counseling, giving rewards and incentives, etc. in line with the government's vision of protecting children and their rights. The author Rikhia Ghoshal in her paper, 'New Forms of Discipline and Punishment and their Effectiveness in Schools of Kolkata: Voices from Classrooms' has researched with samples of students and teachers from both low cost and expensive schools of Kolkata. The result showed that teachers mostly keep away from

taking any disciplinary measure and students on the other hand feel that teachers are no longer interested in socialisation and disciplining of their pupils.

'The Cultural Importance of River Island Majuli: The Living Heritage of Assam' is written by Piyasi Bharasa. She has discussed the importance of the world's largest riverine island and its culture, which is declared as a world heritage site by UNESCO. Her focus is on the unique heritage of Vaishnavite practices of the island. She also has recommended on its touristic possibilities.

Supratim Bhattacharya has written, 'Preserving the Cultural Heritage in Terms of Traditional Religious Practices: A Study among the Tai Ahoms of Assam'. The author observed continuity of culture in some practices in the realm of rituals connected with birth, marriage and death among the Tai-Ahom people of Assam particularly of the people residing in Moranjana Gaon village.

Kuntal Narayan Chaudhuri and Shreyashi Chaudhuri have taken up study of a unique form of fish culture in the rice fields by the Apatani group of people inhabiting the Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh. The paper is entitled, 'Fish Farming in Rice Paddy Environments: A Re-look at the Ingenious Agricultural Heritage of the Apatanis of Northeast India'.

The article, 'Deforestation and Feminisation of Poverty: A Real Experience from Nayagram Block, Jhargram District, West Bengal', written by Manishree Mondal and Chayon Chakraborty described the predicament of women folk who live in the forest and its fringe area. For this study they have taken up villages in Nayagram Block of Jhargram, West Bengal. It is seen that deforestation leads to further poverty and marginalization of women, who live on forest products.

Marriages are always celebrated with pomp and grandeur as well as solemnity. Religion and nationality plays a major role in nuptials and its celebration. Fairooz Jahaan from Bangladesh has written a paper, 'A study on the marriage system of colonial Bengal'. During British colonial times Bengal had a cosmopolitan population, consisting of Bengalis and Britishers. The author has shown the patterns of marriages in terms of resemblance, diversity and sustainability of the ties. Light is thrown on marriages taken place between the members of the same communities as well as on inter racial marriages.

Solomon Islary, in the article, 'Are women victims of patriarchal social system in the process of witch hunting? With reference to Assam, an analysis', wrote that witch hunting even at present takes place among the tribal people of Assam. He has given details about the history of witch hunting, concept of witches in the world perspective and in Assam in particular. He has gone through case studies of the NGOs etc, and has found that the women are most vulnerable in this practice. He has made valuable recommendations for eradication of such system.

'Health care and health practices among tribes: A study on 'Yaws' Disease among Tribes in West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh is written by J. Rani Ratna Prabha. Yaw is the local name for an infectious disease caused by a bacterium called *Treponema Pertenue*. It mainly is found in

warm, humid regions. It affects the skin, bone, and cartilage. The authors made a study in West Godavari region and found that the infection takes place among tribals, who are marginalized, live in the forests and does not have modern health care and sanitary facilities. She has recommended some measures to be taken by the state, so that the misery caused by the disease may be alleviated.

Debashish Mitra in his paper, 'The relevance of dietetics in Gandhian philosophy: Mapping the trajectories of his experiments;' has discussed about political experimentation of Mahatma Gandhi with a view to high lighting the daily practices of Indian life style in contrast to the British colonials in India. Dietetics was one of them. This had a great importance on Gandhi's politics.

Food culture and available resources from the environment also has got influence on religious practices. Bibhu. K. Mohanty's paper, 'Food Culture in the Socio-Religious life of the people in coastal Odisha with special reference to *Pitha';* shows that in coastal regions of Orissa rice is the staple food, which is grown since ancient times. *Pitha* is a condiment made from rice. Importance of *pitha* in religious activities and other rituals and the way in which nature with its resources controls the ritualistic behavior of mankind is pointed out.

'Has the Flag Ship Programme of India Met Its Vision in Reality? : A Qualitative Study on Open Air Defecation among women in Rural India' is written by *S.* Kalyani and Nikita Ruth D'cruz. This is an outcome of a major project sanctioned by ICSSR. The authors have studied attitude of women on open air defecation in a village in Kancheepuram district of Tamilnadu. It came out that for the success of the "Sachh Bharat Mission" of the Government, culture and deep rooted behavior of the individuals are to be taken into consideration.

The authors Sumit Kumar Minz and Roshni Kujur have discussed migration and problems of acquiring citizenship in the country migrated to in their paper, 'Citizenship, Cross-border Migration and India's foreign Policy A Paradigm shift: Assessment of the Rohingya Crisis". The focus is on the Rohingyas of Myanmar, who are at present stateless and have migrated to India and other neighboring countries. The paper has made a critique of India's policy towards a specific refugee law.

The article, 'Gender Preference and Culture Construct in a Matrilineal and a Patrilineal Society: A Study in Alipurduar District, West Bengal', written by Suchismita Sen Chowdhury is a comparative study of the Rabha, a matrilineal community and Mech, a patriarchal group. Both the groups live in Alipurduar District of West Bengal. Among the Rabhas by societal norms women take part in important affairs of the family, where as among the Mech women, due to recent opportunity for education, sanctioned by the male members of the society, may come forward. However, modernization according to the author is bringing in change for gender preference among the females of male dominated societies.

A book review is included in this issue. The book is on the educational policy of India.

The present issue of the journal is enriched by the valuable contribution of the authors from diverse fields of study. The editors thank them and offer gratitude to the scholars who have kindly take time out of their usual busy schedule and have reviewed the papers for the publication.

Ranjana Ray

Sarmistha De Basu

CONTENT

LECTURE

Origin of the Bengali Language :
Udaya Kumar Chakraborty …1

ARTICLES

1. Choices and challenges of consecrated women leadership in Faith Based Organizations in India:
K. Gulam Dasthagir and Shilpita Gine ...12

2. Impact of Active and Passive Engagement in Musical Activity on Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Levels of NET/JRF Aspirants during COVID-19 Pandemic:
Samarpita Chatterjee & Roan Mukherjee …23

3. New Forms of Discipline and Punishment and their Effectiveness in Schools of Kolkata: Voices from Classrooms:
Rikhia Ghoshal …36

4. The Cultural Importance of River Island Majuli: The Living Heritage of Assam:
Piyasi Bharasa …52

5. Preserving the Cultural Heritage in Terms of Traditional Religious Practices: A Study among the Tai Ahoms of Assam:
Supratim Bhattacharya …66

6. Fish Farming in Rice Paddy Environments: A Re-look at the Ingenious Agricultural Heritage of the Apatanis of Northeast India:
Kuntal Narayan Chaudhuri and Shreyashi Chaudhuri …74

7. Deforestation and Feminisation of Poverty: A Real Experience from Nayagram Block, Jhargram District,West Bengal:
Manishree Mondal and *Chayon Chakraborty* …87

8. A study on the Marriage System of colonial Bengal:
Fairooz Jahan …102

9. Are women victims of patriarchal social system in the process of witch hunting? with reference to Assam, an analysis:
Solomon Islary. …117

10. Health care and Health practices among Tribes: A study on 'Yaws' Disease among Tribes in West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh:
J. Rani Ratna Prabha …126

11. The relevance of dietetics in Gandhian philosophy:
Mapping the trajectories of his experiments
Debashish Mitra …138

12. Food Culture in the Socio-Religious life of the people in coastal Odisha
With special reference to *Pitha:*
Bibhu.K. Mohanty …150

13. Has the Flag Ship Programme of India Met Its Vision in Reality? :
A Qualitative Study on Open Air Defecation among women in Rural India
S. Kalyani and Nikita Ruth D'cruz …164

14. Citizenship, Cross-border Migration and India's foreign Policy A Paradigm shift:
Assessment of the Rohingya Crisis
Sumit Kumar Minz and Roshni Kujur. …182

15. Gender Preference and Culture Construct in a Matrilineal and a Patrilineal Society:
A Study in Alipurduar District,West Bengal
Suchismita Sen Chowdhury …192

16. BOOK REVIEW
Teaching Learning Strategies in Higher Education, edited by Dr. Kandi Kamala
Dr. Gedam Kamalakar …204

17. Acknowledgements to the Reviewers …205

Origin of the Bengali Language[1]

Udaya Kumar Chakraborty

Abstract: I thank the Kolkata Society for Asian Studies for giving me the opportunity for delivering 'Suniti Kumar Chatterji Memorial Lecture' for this year. With all my respect to Late Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, and all Indian Linguists I am entering into my observation regarding the problem to find out the source or origin of the Bengali Language.

The origin and development of the Bengali language genealogically is established by the eminent linguists. It is known to us that, National Professor late Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his monumental work, "*The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*" [ODBL] (1926) reconstructed the root of Bengali grammatical words and established grammatical rules based on historical principles. In a word, he has glorified our Mother tongue Bengali language, when we were under the bondage of British rulers.

The genealogical identification of Bengali language was established long ago by the European scholars. Prof. S. K. Chatterji referred their names in the Preface of his book ODBL. According to him,

> "From Morris and Skeat, Sweet and Wright, and Jesperson and the rest, and from Helfenstein and Bruggmann, -masters of Indo-Aryan philology like Uhlenbeck and Wackernagel, Whitney and Pischel, Beams and Bhandarkar, Hoernle and Grierson and others were naturally approached and studied for guidance and light: and I began also to look round myself, to observe facts in the words as written and as actually spoken." [ODBL, Preface, xi, Rupa & Co, 1985]

At present we have no doubt that, the Bengali language is originated from Old Indo-Aryan language family. And this Aryan language genealogically falls under the group of Indo-European language family. S. K. Chatterji himself confessed that he was guided by the scholars who were regarded as scholars of Indo-European languages, and we find that when he was a student of Post Graduate class, the idea of investigation of Bengali language struck him. He studied historical and comparative method of investigation of a language and found that the problems of Indo-European languages are equally connected with Bengali language.

[1] Sunuti Kumar Chatterji Memorial Lecture for the year 2021 delivered on August 20, 2021 online through Google Meet by Kolkata Society for Asian Studies.

It is clear to us that, Prof. Chatterji was influenced by the historical and comparative method of language investigation, and accepted the opinion that the Bengali language is the descendant of Indo-European Language family. During the years 1919 to 1922 he came in touch with many scholars. Of them L. D. Barnett, F. W. Thomas, Daniel Jones, Sir E. Denison Ross, R. W. Chambers, E. H. G. Grattan, Robin lower, Antoine Meillet, Jules Bloch, Sylvain Lévi, Paul Pelliot, Jean Przyluski and Sir George Grierson are remarkable. Dr. L. D. Barnett supervised his work. Prof. Chatterji studied Prakrit, Sanskrit, Persian, Gothic, Old Irish, Old English, Indo-Aryan Philology, Phonetics etc. Naturally, he was inspired by the scholars of London and Paris. When Prof. Chatterji studied in Europe, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was not alive. He died on February 22, 1913. Though his lectures published in book form "*Cours de linguistique générale*" in French language in the year 1916, compiled by his two former students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, his ideas on Structural Linguistics and Synchronic Grammar was not yet known by the majority of linguists. Saussure was considered as the father of 20th century modern linguistics. Prof. Chatterji studied modern phonetics from Daniel Jones and he remarked that, Daniel Jones was his teacher and also 'a warm friend and helper' of him.

George A. Grierson noticed that the Bengali grammarians are silent about the history of Bengali language and are not interested in describing the original form of Bengali language. Grierson opined that the Bengali language is a descendant of 'Māgadhī Prakrit', an official language of Magadha. Grierson wrote,

> "With the shifting of the political gravity at a later epoch, it became superseded as a literary form of speech by dialects current farther to the West, but as a spoken language it has developed into the modern Bengali, Oṛiyā, Bihārī, and Assamese." [ODBL, Foreword, 1925, vi]

Actually the European scholars had established the genealogical identity of modern Bengali language applying the Historical and Comparative methodology. August Schlecher (1821-1868), a German Linguist was influenced by pre-Darwinian biology and followed natural science. His attempt to reconstruct Proto-Indo-European [PIE] parent (mother?) language and his model known as '*Stammbaumtheorie*' or family tree model published in his book "*Compendium der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*" in the year 1861-62 established the relation between old and modern languages.

Let us take a view of linguist I. J. S. Taraporewala. In his book "Elements of the Science of Language", published in the year 1931, he discussed that India presents an amazing collection of languages and dialects. Actually the population of India is made up of several racial Strata. And these languages are 'lying one over the other'. According to him, we have a whole collection of Non- Indo- European languages overlaid by the Indo-Aryan Languages.

Most Non-Indo-European languages used by aboriginal semi civilized tribes. We know that very few of them have written records and a great many of them do not pauses any written literature.

They have their own oral literature and cultural activities which they perform. Prof. Taraporewala commented,

> "Among these languages, however, we find many a clue to words and phrases used among the modern Aryan languages." [Taraporewala, 1931, 208]

Taraporewala noticed a very common linguistic attitude. We found that, when more than one language family come in contact with one another, due to several reasons, may be it regional co-habitation, or a business place or any other platform, the exchange of linguistic corpuses play an important role. And as a result, language mixing becomes an essential factor of language development. Co-existence of Aryan and Non-Aryan languages in a particular regional domain, such borrowing of word or phrases is quite common criteria of language change and development from time to time. Prof. S. K. Chatterji opined that Sanskrit conquered India and outside India. It indicates the importance of synthesis of the two cultures Aryan and non-Aryan. We find in his "*Indo-Aryan and Hindi*", he claimed that the speakers of non-Aryan language communities adopted Aryan language.

> "The Aryan language, within a few centuries after it became established in India, as it gradually began to be adopted by masses of non-Aryans, started to take a new turn." [Chatterji: 1969: 82]

Particularly, in my opinion, without any historical and comparative knowledge of linguistic attitude, descriptive or structural even generative vehicle of linguistic conception is one sided game. In respect of Bengali language, the task of a generative grammar is to discover the Internalized grammar of a native speaker. And this internalized grammar of a native speaker resulted through many stages of development of language or languages. The linguistic heritage native speakers of a particular language possess in their mind, actually in several domains of their brain inherited from time to time.

It is a known fact that, the Austric, Tibeto-Chinese, Davidian and Indo-European are the main four language families in India. Beside these four language families there are some unclassified languages also. Taraporewala followed Sir G. A. Grierson's "*Linguistic Survey of India*" and S. K. Chatterji's "*ODBL*".

Pater W. Schmidt put together the Malay-Polynesian or Austronesian languages under Austric family. According to some scholars this Austric family is also connected with some aboriginal languages, which have a long past oral heritage in India. In my opinion, most of these oral languages at present are extinct languages. They adopted a dominant language surrounded by their local or migrated habitations.

But during my fieldwork in West Bengal my observation is that, some of these aboriginal people are gradually adopting Bengali as their Mother Tongue. Younger generation are speaking other than their Mother Tongue. In West Bengal, the dominant language as well as a killing language is

Bengali. But who knows the past history of the people who live in Bengal and speak Bengali as their Mother Tongue? Are they belongs to those extinct language families at present which have no trace at all? They adopted Bengali surrounded by their present or past habitation. In Bengal, are they a part of Bengali speakers? This will be discussed latter.

At present, Munda or Kol language as one of the Austro-Asiatic branch of the Austric languages, is divided into two main regional branches, i) Eastern and ii) Western. West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa are main areas of this Eastern branch and the main languages of this branch are Sāntali, Mundari, Bhumij, Koḍa, Ho, Korwa etc. The word 'kol' means 'man' but the Sanskrit meaning is 'pig'. Grierson wanted to avoid Sanskrit meaning named this language family as 'Munda'. Grierson also sometimes accepted the word 'kherwari' [Bhoumick: 2008: 3]. But Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji preferred the word 'kol' with its original meaning as 'man'.

These languages are surrounded by dominating Aryan languages. Pater W. Schmidt and Grierson believed that Munda grammar is very close to Turkish grammar. Mr. Skrefsrud in his "Sāntali Grammar" marked some characteristics of Munda speech which have influenced other languages of India. Prof S. K. Chatterji inspired Dr. Suhrid Kumar Bhaumick who worked in this field and he believed that Santali and Bengali are closely connected languages. I appreciate his effort. Prof. Bhoumick's method of research is based on comparative studies. But sometimes in finding conclusion, he was guided by some pre-assumptions which he believed. He made a conclusion that, we have no doubt that, civilization spread throughout the Asia and Europe from India [Bhoumick: 1985: 47]. I do not agree with him.

In India, maximum languages of Tibeto-Chinese family are Tibeto-Burman than Thai-Chinese. Some of the Tibeto-Chinese group of languages are Sunwar, Gurung, Magari and Lepcha are considered as Non-Pronominalised Himalayan Group. The various branches of Tibeto-Burman language families such as, North Assam, Middle and South Assam, Arakan-Burma are connected in a complex manner with so many dialects. Kiranti, Dhimal, Meithei, Lushei etc. are important. Bengali has some influences over these languages. And it may be possible that as these languages are neighbouring languages Bengali was influenced by these languages.

The main region of Dravidian language family is naturally far from our Bengal territory. Kurukh and Malto fall under the Intermediate group of the Dravidian languages. It is interesting to note that, some scholar like Bishop Caldwell found nearer relation with Ural and Altai families. Dr. G. U. Pope found that Dravidian language is related with Aryan languages in morphological features. Prof. O. Schrader tried to show their affinity with the Finno-Ugric family [Taraporewala: 1931: 221-222].

Taraporewala mentioned three stages of Indo-Aryan languages in India as Prakrita. He also followed Grierson's model of Inner and Outer language groups. According to him Eastern Hindi is Intermediate language. Prof. S. K. Chatterji criticised this inner and outer division of Indo-Aryan language. Grierson and Taraporewala considered Eastern languages like Behari, Oriya, Bengali and

Assami are Outer Languages, whether the Inner Languages are Northern, Central, Southern and Western. Central one is the pure group of Indo-Aryan or Aryan language family.

In ODBL, Prof. Chatterji noticed that, during three periods of Indo-Aryan language, Old-Indo-Aryan (1500 B.C. – 600 B.C.), Middle Indo Aryan (600 B.C. – 1000 A.C.) and New-Indo-Aryan (after 1000 A.C.) the main characteristics of this language affected most of the dialects. He discussed briefly such phonetic, morphological and syntactical characteristics.

Taraporewala wanted to use the term Primary Prakrita, Secondary Prakrita and Tertiary Prakrita instead of Old Indo-Aryan, Middle Indo-Aryan and New Indo-Aryan respectively. He placed spoken language as opposed to Sanskrit and accepted Sanskrit is the oldest dialect of literature. According to him, Bengali as one of the Eastern language family falls under the Outer group of language like other Eastern languages Bihari, Oria, Assamese etc. Bengali is divided into two groups, literary dialect and spoken dialects. We know this spoken dialect is also divided into main five dialects.

While writing *ODBL*, Professor S. K. Chatterji expressed his ideas that, actually he followed the modern philologists of that time, who were the scholar in the area of Comparative Linguistics. Professor Jules Bloch accepted the methodology of Comparative Philology and plan in describing the origin and development of a modern Indo-Aryan language, Marathi in his work "Formation de la Language marathe" and Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji adopted his plan. Professor Chatterji observed the racial, historical and cultural background of the native speakers. Prof. Chatterji gave importance in forming linguistic rules for Bengali and other modern Indian languages.

Like modern linguist Professor Chatterji also believed that concrete linguistic corpus is essential for scientific research. He confessed that,

> "I have tried my best not to be dogmatic, and although I had to speculate and hypothesize at times to explain facts, I hope I have not let loose my fancy to roam freely, unchecked by restraints of science." [ODBL: xiv]

Prof. S. K. Chatterji noticed some exceptions and remarkable ideas but still he remarked about his work that, many of his views expressed in his book, may be ultimately proved to be wrong in future. He noticed that, the Sanskrit words are borrowing words in Bengali, while the genuine Bengali forms are marked as vulgar or '*asādhu*'. The Spirit of the Indian and European Scholars expressed in their Bengali Grammars hurt him. They failed to shake off the Sanskrit idea. He observed that,

> "To make confusion worse confounded, the spirit of scholasticism is not yet dead: we have elaborate grammars of Sanskrit masquerading as Bengali grammar, in which the genuine Bengali forms have been branded as vulgar (*asādhu*) beside the so-called 'polite' (*sādhu*) forms borrowed from Sanskrit". [ODBL: xv]

Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharji remarked that, Professor Chatterji gave importance of Pre Aryan substratum in the Aryan speech. We find that, he mentioned the border of the Bengali language. There are several aboriginal language families and dialects. Bengali like other modern Aryan languages in India is still spreading at the expense of the aboriginal tribal languages. This point is very important. We know Professor Chatterji's famous book 'kirata-Jana- Krti', where he marked the Sino-Tibetan influences on the language and culture in India. He also emphasized Newari language of Nepal, the Bodo language of Bengal, Tripura and Assam. He wrote on the Meithei language of Manipur and some other Tibeto-Burman languages. These languages have some affinity with Indian languages and culture. Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharji remarked,

> "He emphasises the composite character of the Indian people in both race and culture - a synthesis of the once diverse cultures of the Aryan and non-Aryan peoples (Aryan, and Austric of Nishada, Dravidian and Mongoloid or Kirāta" [Bhattercharji: 1979: 5]

It is a known fact that professor Chatterjee followed historical and comparative methodology in his early life but later on he gave traces on the Descriptive and Structural approach. Like Ferdinand de Saussure he believed language as a human phenomenon. He wanted to develop his ideas and tried to analyse a language as a fragment of speech. He considered that, language is something dynamic and it has a creative approach. It is not artificial or a static one. With a heartiest regard to late National Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, I am expressing my observation in brief.

It is interesting to note that, Taraporewala wanted to indicate language-mixing by an arrow sign. He explained that an arrow indicates that the language shades off into the other by imperceptible degree through a succession of mixed dialects. If we follow the table number-XIII [Taraporewala: 1931: 260] we will find that Maithili or Tirhutia language is connected with Bengali, Northern dialects of Oriya group are connected with Bengali, Assamese Mayang is connected with Bengali. And these languages formed mixed languages. Similarly, Bengali Western Rarhi dialect of Purnia connected with Behari language and Midnapore dialect mixed with Oriya. Bengali Vanga or Eastern group Haijong connected with Tibeto-Burman, Chakma is also connected with Burmese language and Kamrupa connected with Assamese. Taraporewala commented,

> "Mixed dialects of Bengali and Assamese arose as a necessity in order to keep up communication with the numerous aboriginal tribes. One of the most interesting of these is the Jharevā dialect of Assamese which is a regular "pidgin", made up of Bengali, Garo and Assamese." [Taraporewala: 1931: 260]

This observation is very interesting and actually in discussing our language we had often forgot in analysing such mixed Bengali.

Philologists and Linguists proved by their Historical and Comparative studies that languages of the world are classified in several branches. They also found some unclassified languages. These languages are not related with any main branches. The Scholars of Historical and Comparative

Philology established from time to time, it is interesting that the languages of India are not of the same language family. There are four main language groups, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan or Mongoloid language families and some other unclassified languages.

The historians proved that a group of Aryan language speaking people entered India. Are they only one group? It never is possible because all Aryan speakers are not belonging to the same group and they entered in India in several times and took shelter in different areas. It may be possible. They gradually conquered one after one area where already the people of different language communities and different races entered before them and made their homeland. Prof. Chatterji wrote in his "*Kirāta-jana-kṛti*",

> "The intermingling of different races and cultures, which took place in varying proportions and under special local conditions in the different areas of India, gave rise to certain composite types with more or less common characteristics." [Chatterji: 1974:3]

We should follow the researches made by the anthropologists. Prof, Chatterji also followed them. In a word India is a multi-lingual country where several aboriginal races live together with new comer races that came in India from time to time. Co-existence of Mother Tongue of these aboriginal and tribal communities with main classified language communities is a remarkable feature in Indian context. Now we are going to conclude our observations. We find in "*Kirāta-jana-kṛti*", Prof. Chatterji believed that our cultural heritage is depending on various cultures. He wrote,

> "Can we think of Indian History and Civilisation, particularly in Eastern India, without the contributions of the Licchavis and the Newars, the Koch, Kachari, Tipra and other Boḍo peoples (details of whose services are now matters of research), the Ahoms, the Jaintias and the Manipuris?" [Chatterji: 1974: 184]

When Professor S. K. Chatterji raises such question regarding Indian history and civilization we find our solution. No doubt linguist K. P. Tamsang (1915-1985), who worked in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, reacted against the foreign writers who worked on Lepcha community. He said,

> "I studied all the voluminous books written on Lepchas by different authors but very sad to say that most of the facts I read therein are absolutely incorrect. They are badly worded, open to misinterpretations and dangerous to the interests of the Lepchas."[Tamsang:1983:]

K. P. Tamsang denied the migration theory of the western scholars and proved that, Lepchas fled towards Tibet crossing the Himalayas. To them their original homeland Himalayans was 'Mayel Lyang', the land of hidden paradise. It is sufficient to say that, we should search our own lingual identity and should revise our past lingual identity.

When the Europeans worked on Indian oral and aboriginal languages, they tried to bring into some formula in which they are accustomed. Such as,

> "The Lushais are a fine intelligent tribe of Mongoloid hillmen inhabiting parts of the wild forest-covered mountainous region forming watershed between India and Upper Burma." [Lorrain: 1990: v]

But when Mr. Lorrain claimed that, they choose simple Roman script for them, we find a philanthropic mind. But when he thought "our system" will be followed by them, then the study of an aboriginal language may be formulized by the civilized enriched language community like English.

It is clear that, the Aryan people came in contact with the Pre-Aryan and Post-Aryan language communities in different age. Indian philologists gave importance to the spoken dialects rather than written artificial Sanskrit language. And may be, for this reason Prof. Chatterji divided Aryan languages like Udīcya, Pratīcya, Madhya-dēśīya, Prācya and Dākṣiṇātya as regional dialects originated from Spoken Dialect in one side and Literary Dialect on the other. Prof Chatterji mentioned Non-Aryan influence upon Aryan Language.

The basic theoretical conception followed the assumption that we are speaking an Aryan language, named Bengali. But our racial identity is that we are not that race who used Aryan as their Mother Tongue in the pre-historical age. This conception is no doubt miss-leading and contradictory.

Each and every language has its own structural features known as language system. This system is governed by internalized grammatical rules, which a native speaker bears mentally. This system inherited a native speaker of a particular language as his or her possession. This language habit is expressed by the utterance of a native speaker, which is unique in a word. Now it is clear that, the language habit mainly depends on the utterance or sound production of a particular language, mainly the language the native speaker acquired by birth and is accustomed with that speech. If we try to realize what Abul Kalam Manzur Morshed wanted to express in the following sentences, we shall find the reality. He wrote,

> "Though SCB is spoken by the bulk of the educated class both in contemporary Bangladesh and West Bengal, there exist several divergent dialects of Bengali. Some of them, due to phonological and morphological differences, are not intelligible to SCB speakers." [Morshed: 1985: 5]

Such difference between Standard Colloquial Bengali [SCB] and farthermost regional dialects is not mutual intelligible due to something non-Aryan elements present in Bengali language. Let us assume that the speakers are governed by their internalized speaking habit, which may be non-Aryan habit of utterance or may be Aryan, and who is able to trace the origin?

We compared grammatical words and morphological features. The Scholars discussed word formation, sound change pattern etc. But we should compare Segmental, Supra-segmental pattern, Syntactic structures of Bengali language comparing with the Aryan and Non-Aryan languages. It is a fact that so many spoken words used by native Bengali speakers are disappearing from time to time. Still there are so many regional 'desi' words, and we failed to find out their source.

We accepted a dual opinion that, the Bengali as an Indo European language gradually took its modern form changing from time to time. But we considered those 'dēśi' words which have no Aryan background are the original Bengali language. Let us assume that, the speakers of Bengali language of different areas are using the words without knowing their language heritage.

I do not know the solution at all. The words are the leaves of a language. The substitution process can replace a word. But an internalized grammar retained. Therefore, the pronunciation systems, morphological features, syntactic structures of Bengali language in many times do not match with the Sanskrit grammar. I have discussed such syntactic relation of Bengali with non-Aryan languages in my book, "*Bangla Sangbartani Byakaran*" (The Bengali Transformational Grammar, 2016, pp 241-252).

Should we revise this genealogical tree which shows the origin of the Bengali language or prepare another root of the origin of Bengali language? I dare to say, how it will be possible? It is established long before by the eminent linguists that, the Bengali language is one of the modern Indo-European languages.

Moreover, those who are accepting Bengali as their Mother Tongue and following the phonological, morphological and syntactic rules of Bengali language are not Aryan. Prof. S. K. Chatterji noticed such rules afterwards. He wrote in his book "*Indianism and the Indian Synthesis*",

> "In most of the New Indo-Aryan languages, we note, as in Dravidian, the absence of the affix for the dative-accusative case for neuter or inanimate nouns." [Chatterji:1962 : 177]

Prof. Chatterji also noticed some syntactical rules present in Indo-European speech also are present in English and Sanskrit. He commented,

> "But New Indo-Aryan has completely abandoned this practice, and follows Dravidian (and Austric Kol) in having a new syntactical device with the ordinary (and the only) form of the adjective standing for both the comparative and superlative." [Chatterji:1962 : 177]

Is it true that they are rejecting the rules of their Mother Tongue, which they preserved as a native speaker? Assume it, that this process of language rejection of minor oral pre-Aryan language groups happened during the whole period after the Aryan speakers came in contact with those pre-Aryan minor language communities who had no writing system for their own. They gradually

adopted that language and accepted a writing system through accepting education. This process of transformation took long time.

At present we the people of India, speaking a dialect of Aryan language and do not know what our original linguistic identity is. Assume this is our irony of fate. Aryan language as a dominant language played a great role in killing oral languages. We should remember that Rabindranath Thakur wrote in his poem '*vangavira*' that, Maxmuller told, we are Aryan. On hearing this prestigious identity, leaving our work we are lying idle.

''মোক্ষমূলর বলেছে ''আর্য'',
সেই শুনে সব ছেড়েছি কার্য,
মোরা বড় বলে করেছি ধার্য,
আরামে পড়েছি শুয়ে।''[বঙ্গবীর, মানসী]

Though afterwards Maxmullar corrected his idea that, 'Aryan' is not a race, it is a name of a language family. Thank you.

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Choices and challenges of consecrated women leadership in Faith Based Organizations in India

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Abstract: Contesting the popular claim of Faith Based Organizations as a sphere of women emancipation, endeavoring to investigate the extent of participation, representation, versus exclusion of the consecrated women leaders of these organizations, based on case study of Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Calcutta using Qualitative data through in-depth interviews with the women leaders of these organizations and utilizing the theoretical propositions like R.W. Connell's "gender order", P. Bourdieu's "habitus" and J.C Alexander's "neo-functionalist" understanding of the civil sphere,this article argues thateven when the increasing scale and scope of the organizations increase participation of consecrated women in the intervention activities of the organizations in terms of empowering the marginalized as per their defined duties, their participation in the governance of these organizations is limited. While the hegemony of socio cultural fabric of Indian society, constituted by the dominion of patriarchy has led to the gender stereotyping perpetuated through Indian tradition assigning descriptive roles to the women leaders of the organization, reinforced by theology which eventhough define their role as 'empowering' the marginalized, their duties continue to be of service providers.

Keywords: *Faith Based Organization, gender order, religious minorities, consecrated women, women empowerment*

Background

In the Indian context, institutionalization of voluntarism through The Charter Act of 1813 unleashed the proliferation of Christian missionary activities that incorporated gender concerns in Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) [1] not only among Christian community but also in other communities of India. Retrospectively, while nation state was found to be less adequate and equipped to realise women's development, the FBOs with Christian missionary-endeavors initiated gender concerns in civil society agenda that contributed significantly in the transformation of the status of Indian women in the past two centuries (Basu, 2012: 105-112). This enabled FBO's purpose being served on one hand in incorporating the women emancipation agenda even prior to women empowerment initiatives by the State; and women being included in these organizations as part of their activity on the other. Against the pervasive perception that these organizations are pro women empowerment, the paper with inputs from primary data is an exploration of the reality in

terms of the extent to which these organizations, apart from aiming to empower the marginalized, empower the consecrated women leaders of the FBOs. Studies on Christian women in Bengal elucidate their involvement in church related activities as a scope for their entry into public sphere. Such participation however did not empower them to take up decisions within the public space or challenge the hegemonic relations often coining it as a "comfortable" space (Aleaz 2009:079). Nevertheless, the lack of studies on the influence of missionary work on women's empowerment in India limits understanding of some of the ideological premises of the organizations tied to or originating in religious ideologies, nationalism or other social reform movements, accounts on FBOs declare that there has been limited enquiry concerning the relationship between gender and FBOs both on the part of the feminists as well as faith based theorists. In the backdrop of the history of women's empowerment in India often failing to identify the role of missionary work along with the nature of the role of the women leaders within the FBOs, this paper tries to examine the extent of inclusion and empowerment of consecrated women within FBO srun by Christian missionaries.

Investigating the FBOs

Located at the interface of gender and power, the FBOs are characterized by distinct gender order. Connell's (1987) conception of gender order is a combination of 'gender regimes' at societal level which ultimately prescribes roles to the particular genders. These "gender regimes" are the structural accounts constraining the gender interplay within institutions (Maharaj 1995-59). Connell argues for a practice-based theory which identifies power relationship as the centre and brings out the interaction between the role theory of masculinity and femininity and the categorical theory emphasizing the role of social practice which is inherent to any social structure. The analysis of the structure manifests an order which is gendered in nature. Connell further refers to three central elements of gender order - the sexual division of labor, the structure of power and the structure of cathexis and in each of the elements; it is not the individual but the social processes that play role in determining the order of gender. The gender order and gender regimes are only sustained through institutions. The structure determines the freedom of the agency and also its limitations. The constraints within institutions and its practicality are visible in the various power relationships within the institutions of the society. Thus the examination of social structure begins with the study of its institutions (Connell 1987-92). The fact that gender relationships are altered within the FBOs, portray gender order within these organizations. The gendered division of labor plays a vital role which is an upshot of the constraints that the structures offer. This results in the shaping and training of the women with particular skills that serves as an institutional mechanism for the sustenance of gender order (Maharaj 1995:52). In consonance with Connell thus this article conceptualizes FBOs as gender regimes.

This article endeavors to examine how gender order is reproduced and perpetuated in FBOs in India with the case study of Roman Catholic (RC)[2]Archdiocese of Calcutta [3].The city of Kolkata accounts for 0.72 per cent of Christians and 0.88 per cent of the State's Christian population resides in Kolkata according to the Census report of 2011. The R C Archdiocese of Calcutta covers the city of Kolkata, Howrah and adjacent regions. There are around 25 Congregations [4] of RC consecrated sisters operating 116 RCFBOs for the downtrodden in the city of Kolkata according to

The RC Directory of India 2010 and 2014 and The Archdiocese of Calcutta. The first level of selection was made in the selection of Congregations through which 13 out of 25 Congregations were chosen. Within the 13 Congregations based on proportionate random sampling design, 18 RCFBOs were chosen. RC sisters occupying managerial and leadership positions from each of the RCFBOs were interviewed. The organizations varied in terms of their activities and scope primarily working for the marginalized and downtrodden. Data from each selected organizations were gathered from reports and records of the organization. These reports outlined the history and genesis of the organizations in relation to the involvement of women. In-depth interviews with the sisters in leadership positions were conducted; particularly of those who manage the organizations as well as performed as liaison between their organization and the Congregation. This was done to understand the processes and patterns of services.

Women Representatives of Roman Catholic Faith Based Organizations

The historicity of Christian missionary organizations in India corroborates the tracing of the history of gender inclusion in RCFBOs in India. Evidently, these organizations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries presented a combination of men and women working in such organizations addressing the needs and welfare of both men and women in Indian society.

Jeffery Alexander's neo functionalist approach to civil society depicts it as a space of inclusion, functioning as an agency of solidarity and integration. He chalks out a binary discourse of civil society at the levels of motives, social relations and sustainable institutions each level manifesting a set of democratic and undemocratic codes which acts as foundations on which the functioning of civil society rely. The democratic code manifests the means of solidarity and integration while the undemocratic codes manifest the antipathies. At the level of social motives Alexander proposed activism, autonomy, rationality, reasonableness, calm, self control, realistic and sane as democratic codes of the actors, in terms of the counter democratic code he proposed passivity, dependence, irrationality, hysteria, excitable, passionate, unrealistic and mad. For social relationship he proposes open, trusting, critical, honorable, conscience, truthful, straightforward, deliberative and friendship as democratic codes and secret, suspicious, deferential, self interested, greed, deceitful, calculating, conspirational and enemy as counter-democratic codes. For the sustainability of institutions he puts forward rule, regulated, law, equality, inclusive, impersonal, contractual, social groups and office as democratic code and arbitrary, power, hierarchy, exclusive, personal, ascriptive loyalty, fractions and personality as counter democratic code. The democratic side of each of the three categories is synonymous to the democratic side of the other categories and thus also is antithetical to the undemocratic side of each category. In the light of Alexander's theory the paper attempts to look into social motives, the social relationships and the civil societies in as RCFBOs catering to activism, being inclusive and promoting friendship. Examining the relationship between religion and collective action sociologically, manifests religion as enabling the forging of social network informed by cultural and ideological framework. This framework further initiates activities which benefits the in-group and unleashes an efficacy mechanism facilitating the actors. The ability of the group to enforce social sanctions is crucial to obtaining cooperation from co-ethnics. There thus lies a pro societal behavior in both Catholicism and Islam which enables the suppression of personal behavior and working for the other. Scriptures are a major factor influencing the generosity as in

case of Catholicism; the New Testament strongly states the importance of giving and service (Warner et.al. 2012: 4). The services extended for the society on the part of the organizations run by the consecrated women of RC community which facilitates their own upliftment as well as the upliftment of the women in need at the societal level. Elliott (2006) in writing about civil society includes voluntary groups which for her responds to local needs which itself is a challenge for the State.

One of the Congregations, started in 1887 by a priest initially gathered twelve women of Mangalore to reach out to the sick and needy. The women were from righteous families who were educated and with the effort of whom, the foundation of the Congregation which currently has four provinces under it was built.

Another Congregation was started around twenty years back under the guidance of the priests who had 15 to 20 faith based homes for the marginalized. Among the three RC sisters of the organizations one of them has been pursuing her graduation while the other two RC sisters were senior sisters of the home. Two of the senior sisters completed their Masters in social work. There are total twenty eight children currently staying in the organization under their supervision. The narration of a fifty five year old RC sister who seemed to be happy with her decisions of guiding the girl inmates, stated that there were orphan girls who were once a part of the organization; are well settled in life currently who often came back to tell us how under the guidance of the RC sisters, they could pursue higher studies and could grow up to be professionally successful women.

The RC sisters of another organization described their roles as serving the humankind who believed that every individual irrespective of their religious orientation has the dignity of being human. Even if they are suffering lying on the roadsides or are disowned by their families, they still should live the rest of their life with the dignity, which other human beings enjoy. This becomes the purpose of the services by the sisters. Their role set includes; nursing, medical practitioners, teachers, care givers and also social mobilisers for the beneficiaries.

The sole mission of one of the RCFBOs is to serve the poorest of the poor and this particular institution serve the destitute picked up from streets and railway stations of Kolkata, who are lying with diseases or are dying by the roadside. The task of the institution includes healthcare mainly but it also gets merged with social faith based irrespective of caste, creed, gender, age, religion, ability, class etc. The RC sisters here are directly involved in giving the services from bathing the inmates to cleaning their wounds to taking care of the food and maintaining each inmate's medical record. For the sisters it is not only offering physical faith services but also talking to them, listening to their sorrows and spending time with them are important. There is a Superior who is the Leader of the RC sisters and is associated with the faith based activities directly.

Led by an RC sister, one of the Congregations of Kolkata works in the services of the poor. The leader sister is solely appointed by the process of voting by each of the other sisters. Each RCFBO run by them has a superior who leads the organization. There are four sisters working under the leader and in case of any difficulty; the superiors of each organization approach any of them. The order of decision making among them is not along gender lines at Congregational level. In one of the RCFBOs run by the Congregation, there are six categories of work associated with the organization which are purely based on the training they have received. There is no ranking within.

There are special trainings given, and duties thus are assigned according to the type of training one has obtained. The nature of the training confirms to the requirement of the organization in concern. The activities taken up by women are pictured as by choice of the vocation but in reality is for the fulfillment of the requirement of the organization. The assigned jobs have its grounding in theology. Considering all the RCFBOs, two types of decision making models can be chalked out: the consensus model and the top down model where the latter overrides the former. Each of the organizations even though are led by women, decisions taken by the leader alone is rare. The unique style of leadership is observed whereby major decisions are taken in consultation with committee or the parish priest.

Women Representation and Leadership in Roman Catholic Faith Based Organizations

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is concerned with the 'capacity to act' and everything one conceives which enables to situate oneself in the field. While habitus is defined as the network, or arrangement of relationships among various positions in society, the positions have been considered as determined by the position they occupy in the power structure of the society which often compromise with the advantages of the position putting at stake their relationship with other positions in the society (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97). The habitus of the RC sisters have been considered as intervened by the cultural impositions which to a large extent have also bore an impact on their relationship with the others occupying various positions from culturally majoritarian groups.

Following Bourdieu's "generative structuralism" whereby the individual is shaped by the social structures with an 'ontological correspondence' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127) between the habitus and the field one is in, this article conceptualizes the RCFBOs as well as the culture of religious majority communities as fields; while the habitus of the RC sisters has been considered as socialized according to what Bourdieu terms as the 'transubstantiation' of the majority culture which prescribes and assigns gendered norms to the RC community resulting in their imparting of service activities yet excluding them from decision making within the order of the community.

Chang (2003) opines that a strand of neo-institutional framework has considered the cultural elements as key factor in determining organizational structure. This has also led to a sense of 'mimetic isomorphism' of the organizations whereby the state intimidates and determines the organizations according to its ideology (Lindsay & Wuthnow, 2010: 93-94). This often leads to the RC organizations operating after majoritarian cultural framework whereby patriarchal norms govern the institutions, shape the habitus and determine the field of the actors.

A sense of women empowerment operates within the spheres of the RCFBOs considering the fact that the organizations are women led. However the question here arises about the extent to which the positions give them the power to assert themselves as decision making individuals and active agents, giving them the right to independently choose what is best for the organization taking up more important positions vis-a-vis their leadership within these organizations.

"Power" for Bourdieu is a cultural and symbolic construct acted upon by agency and reified by the structures of society which is an upshot of habitus that direct an individual's behavior within a given society determining roles and sustaining power structures. The cultural prescriptions of the majority community serve as a field contributing to the habitus formation of the minority [5] communities. We conclude that religious women's occupation of the leadership position within the spheres of organizations offering extended services even though privileges them with rights, a politics of palliation operates as it only caters to "problem solving" in sharp contrast to representation. Women's full participation is not ensured particularly of decision making at the organizational level. RCFBOs thus even though reaches out to the marginalized through their service duties, to a large extent hinder their participation in power positions and the organizational level decision making. Order is embedded in the functioning and activities of the organizations being entrenched in the patriarchal culture of the society in which they function and exist incorporating the gender norms and gender stereotype among their participants as well as their beneficiaries poses impediments in granting greater access and transfer of equal power to women. The orientation of the beneficiaries of the services are much alike the women in vows themselves who themselves are working within the patriarchal constraints of the Indian society. The women in India are succumbed to the socio -religious order which often acts as a threat to equality and social order (Chakkuvaracka, 2002).

Connell's conception of gender regimes existing in community and society get incorporated into these organizational structures and functioning which extends reproduction of gender order in RCFBOs. The structural positioning of women particularly their ranking and the expected outcomes of such ranking assigning women their position points out that it is the structure that determines the position and behavior in terms of one's gender.

The research classifies the RCFBOs run by the Christian Missionaries in Kolkata into five types according to the scale and scope of the organizations, as well as the complexity of the responsibilities taken up by the management.

The first type consists of the management and operation of smaller organizations like nursery or kindergarten schools which entail limited responsibilities with the few RC sisters associated with it, the decisions within these small organizations are taken by the sisters. The second type of organizations is medium in size and has comparatively more responsibilities than the first category but is not too complex in its management but the decisions at management level are taken by sisters who are answerable to the higher authorities of the parish. The third type of organizations include large scale organizations in which decisions regarding the activities of it are taken by committees which includes higher authorities apart from the women in leadership. The fourth type consists of organizations managed by the RC sisters but is mainly concerned with activities which are aiming at forging ties with the non religious commoners. Even though the other categories too permeate into nonreligious space, organizations in this category have been seen as providing common utility services. The organizations mainly cater to book shop with reading space, medical dispensary, girl's hostel or homes for the aged. The fifth category consists of organizations which operate at international level; these organizations are no longer limited to the management of it by the RC sisters but are now operating under Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The order

pervasively perceptible in the organizations surveyed is illustrated through case studies depicting each type of organization are thus furnished below:

The only nursery school under a Congregation is managed by all RC sisters for more than two decades. The organization provides education for children from all communities and gives concession to the children in financial need. The organization is having a leader, two other sisters under her and a woman helper. It is comparatively a smaller organization and this decision making lies with the leader who is in her sixties. The nursery does come under parish but routine decisions are taken by the RC sisters only. Thus, it manages all its responsibilities under the leadership of sisters with only the organizational decisions resting with the Diocese.

A home for the girls studying between classes 6^{th} to 12^{th} are run by three RC sisters who are non natives of Kolkata and has pursued higher education. The children staying in the shelter home are school goers while the smaller ones are taught by the RC sisters only. Though the organization was initiated with the effort of the RC sisters, they sought the support of the priests experienced in managing such organizations to establish it. Decisions regarding financial management, personal management, human resource management within the organization etc. rests with the sisters and organizational development liaison with external agencies are made by the parish priests.

A house for facilitating study of medicine for the RC sisters and offering medical services was started by Bishop in 1958. The house facilitated treatment of the sisters and also served as a training ground in nursing, medicine and teaching. There are 14RC sisters under one superior RC sister in the house. It also manages a hostel for girls which accommodate twenty eight girls. Decisions regarding the appointment, transfer and assignment of any kind are rests with the Provincial however they can work under Bishop on his agreement.

Even when they had the choice to work under any Bishop, the permission of the Bishop played an important role and ultimately the decision of the Pope. The authors would like to argue that in each of the cases, the women's decision making capacity is largely shaped by the community requirements and permissions from the male leaders. There even though lies a sense of freedom on the part of the provincial leader but it is also limited to duties regarding the sisters. At larger level, the responsibilities lie with the male leaders or with the committee consisting of both male and female.

A health centre run by the RC sisters from various Congregations which facilitates treatment offered by doctors from various places, also provided medical facilities like blood test and x-ray at subsidized rates. The doctors were from different communities and the centre also has receptionist and lab technicians who were from other communities. However the centre leader is a priest who is known as the director.

A shelter home providing education, healthcare, protection and nutrition to under privileged girl children lay at the heart of the city of Kolkata. The home comes under a state coordinator followed by a project in charge who is an RC sister. Apart from her the other people are all lay people, be it home coordinator, home manager, social mobiliser or "home mothers." There is a systematic process of choosing and recruiting them as the state coordinator comes under the NGO. The role of the RC sister is limited within the confinement of routine matters while decisions related to funding and other things are taken care by the national level NGO. The appointment of staff is done by proper interviews in consultation with the NGO. It is however a cause of concern that prescribed

formats of funding agencies work in accordance with the prevailing cultural norms of the beneficiary country; the UNFPA (United Nations population fund) works on their funding by identifying the local power structures as well as the local faith practices considering in their development interventions (Karam 2010: 435-436).

Each of the five cases is a reflection of each typology of organization in the classification. There is inverse relationship between the scale and scope of the organization and the devolution of authority to women. However the religious prescriptions of abiding by the authority's decision making and not questioning it in spite of being in leadership positions illustrates the outcomes of certain decisions satisfying requirements of the organization yet not resulting into fair choice. Sen's conception of 'liberal paradox' questions the rights and efficiency of such 'social choice' which is gender insensitive and only reflect the decisions of the men in the committee due to the relationship and personal bonds shared among the members. A closer look into the decision making patterns will manifest the concerns more profoundly (Peter, 2003: 20-24).

Considering the origins of the Congregations, most of the studied Congregations had its origin in the West and had its root there, the founders of all the Congregations are women who had a particular mission and thus mobilized the women for concerned purposes. However the operation of the Congregation within the Indian context manifests male leadership initially and then subsequently women's involvement brings into forefront the patriarchal nature of the Indian society, the cultural milieu of which also resulted in the dearth of leadership in its true sense as well as the documentation of women's works within the Congregations in India. Thus there occurs lack of literature on the voices of the women who were associated with FBOs and information is mostly in terms of history, designed upon the cultural prescriptions of the Indian society justified by theology. Correspondingly, gender division of labour prescribed by theology assigning different roles to men and women evolves into gender order reproduced from the culture of the majority community. Tadroz illustrates Smeal's writing about women's role and agency as "systematically reduced from participatory decision-makers to the recipients of trickled-down aid" within an FBO (Tadroz, 2010: 15).

Conclusion

Located in a socio culture ambience perpetuated by the way of life practiced by the religious majority community, insulation between the religious communities seem to dilute by which an overwhelming numerical preponderance of non Christians and their way of life influences the Christian way of life among the religious minority communities in India. Correspondingly, the RCFBOs managed by the Christian missionaries and the community with which they work have high influence of cultural majoritarian way of life, symbols, attitudes and values. Although Christian Missionaries in India have made a mark in mainstreaming the gender concerns through RCFBOs being caught up in the cultural domination of the religious majority community because of which the agenda of women emancipation are to a greater extent less likely to be translated into an agenda of women empowerment among the categories of women providers of community level FBOs and also the women beneficiary of such services. Women to a large extent is marginalised from State institutions and male dominated organizations and finds it easier to get involved with the RCFBOs and community groupings or women's activist groups which have been largely

considered as a space for emancipation of women. By investigating such connection between gender and FBOs with reference to state, market and household, the public private debate gets strengthened (Howell and Mulligan, 2005: 4-5). The RCFBOs limiting itself to inclusion and access can also be seen in not empowering them or giving them the power to control, which further manifests a sense of amelioration. The inclusion of women even though ensures their access and role taking in organizations, the consensus model within the organization mitigates leadership and governance by the RC sisters. In terms of the beneficiaries, planned activities seem to be alleviation of sufferings of people enabling activities by which the women involve themselves in service for the community dedicating their lives in service for the others. This however does not provide them with inputs for their empowerment. Some of the enabling activities which meets the survival requirements or subsistence of the consecrated women also limits their voices. The efforts are not transferring power to women or developing women leadership for the beneficiaries. Such order impedes the full participation of women and often mitigates their empowerment. They are however not given the choice to make their voices heard and even the beneficiaries, whom they re-socialise, often limit themselves in terms of their demands and voices which again impede the process of women empowerment. Gender practices within any faith inevitably are determined by the community's system of leadership, the socio historical setting of the group and the political ideology of the state. The agendas of the community's RCFBOs will have an influence of the majority religious ideologies and gender practices thus promoting gender order within the RCFBOs. Studies on the role of women within RCFBOs manifest instances of gender stereotyping backed up with ideologies of religion (Tadros, 2010: 21).

The role of civil society has to be considered in the backdrop of the dialectics of state and market. This portrays the platform of civil society organizations as facilitating debate and discussion in research paradigm. Jeffery Alexander's neo functionalist approach to civil society portrays it as a sphere facilitating solidarity and integration, the actors of the RCFBOs adhering to the democratic codes of activism, autonomy, rationality, reasonableness, calm, self control, realistic and sane forging social relationships which are open, trusting, critical, honorable, conscience, truthful, straightforward, deliberative and friendly concluding that social motives, the social relationships and the institutions of the minority run RCFBOs caters to activism and inclusiveness promoting friendship on one hand and concretizing beliefs in the way the RCFBOs functions, reproducing societal expectations in the religious and cultural beliefs or social hierarchy on the other. Thus, religious minority organizations in spite of their pioneering efforts and persistent perseverance for gender inclusion and women emancipation tend to get entrenched into the dominant culture of the religious majority community thus largely structure the RCFBOs acting as gender regimes reproducing the gender order of the wider society and culture.

Recommendation

With a view to implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5), the following recommendations are deemed desirable:

1. Capacity building- RC sisters need to be perceived as human resource. Accordingly providing training to them in managerial skills and leadership would enhance their capabilities to participate and represent in governance of RCFBOs.
2. Gender mainstreaming- RCFBO policies needs to be reoriented and made gender sensitive to accord greater space and span of authority to women leaders within RCFBOs.
3. Women empowerment – The goals and activities of RCFBOs need a paradigm shift from amelioration or emancipation to women empowerment with greater accent on skill development and leadership training for the women inmates and beneficiaries.

Notes

1. FBOs: Faith Based Organizations affiliated to a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or a governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation and/or decision-making processes based on religious values, see Ferris (2005) RCFBOs refer to the Roman Catholic FBOs.
2. Roman Catholic(RC) Sisters: Roman Catholic is a denomination among the Christians who identify themselves in close association with the Pope in Rome and Roman Catholic sisters are women who lead their lives according to more simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and work towards reaching out to the people. The nuns on the other hand lead cloistered or semi cloistered lives mainly engaged in prayer within the ministry (A Roman Catholic sister's life Ministry, 2016)
3. Archdiocese: Derived from a Greek word meaning 'administration', Diocese refers to the geographical extent led by Bishops. An Archdiocese is the 'leader' Diocese of the Province which usually is led by the Archbishop.
4. Congregation: 'A group of people assembled for religious worship,' see https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Congregation it also refers to an organized group bestowed with certain activities by the RC order. The membership to the Congregation is permanent.
5. Minority: The definition of the term minority does not limit itself to the size of the population but also the experience of their inconveniences. Robinson (2005) in her book 'Minority Studies' opines that the groups who are considered as minorities share certain common qualities with respect to gender, class or culture. Sociological perception of the concept of religious minority facilitates its understanding in relation to the subjective experience of the group concerned. Working with and reemphasized by the interacting categories of gender, caste or language and the power play among the categories reproduce the process of marginalization.

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Impact of Active and Passive Engagement in Musical Activity on Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Levels of NET/JRF Aspirants during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The study evaluated whether musical activity has a significant impact on psychological parameters such as depression, anxiety, and stress among NET/JRF aspirants when the examination was delayed, and there was uncertainty of it due to the alarming situation caused by the continual rise of the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) in the country and worldwide. A cross-sectional, web-based study was conducted employing self-administered Google forms to gather data from a convenience sample of Indian students. The respondents of the form were allocated to four groups - the control group (neither engaged in musical activity nor were regular listeners of music), the active group (regularly engaged in musical activity), the passive (regularly listened to music) group, and an active-passive engagement group containing participant's who regularly engaged in both active and passive musical activity. Altogether 139 respondents were included in the study. Analysis of the collected data showed that all of the psychological variables studied showed a statistically highly significant difference (< 0.001) between the four groups. Multiple comparison tests also revealed that the studied variables in all the musical activity groups were significantly different ($p < 0.001$) from the control group. However, the variation in the parameters between the musical activity groups was not significant ($p > 0.05$). It was concluded that engaging in musical activity may considerably lower psychological distress in terms of depression, anxiety, and stress, in a worrisome, uncertain, and life-threatening situation of a pandemic when examinations are delayed or put on hold by the competent authorities.

Keywords*: Coronavirus, Impact, Music, Pandemic, Psychological health*

Introduction

The application of music to promote physical, mental, and overall health may be based on either receptive or interactive methods. The receptive method denotes listening to recorded or live music without any direct/active engagement to the musical activity, and hence it is a passive method. In contrast, the interactive method relies on a participatory approach. It is an active method since the subject directly participates in singing, instrument playing, songwriting, choir music, and so on (Chen et al. 2009: 191; Mathew et al. 2017: 7). Music is believed to have a significant impact on

the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social needs of an individual (Dobrzynska et al. 2006: 50). Hence, music is nowadays widely applied to boost psychological and overall health.

Psychological crises, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, have a global presence. Depression features sadness, decrement in social function, lack of interest in previously liked activities, increment in the susceptibility towards cognitive problems, increased psychological stress, lack of concentration, and decline in quality of life. Anxiety is characterized by worries, fear, and increment in tension followed by palpitations, sweating, and a rise in blood pressure. Stress is marked by "a non-specific and generalized response of the body to any demand made on the body" (Chatterjee and Mukherjee, 2019: 2009).

Many studies have found music to be effective in fighting against mental illness, stress, depression, anxiety, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, and many other health ailments (Chatterjee and Mukherjee 2019: 2008; Chatterjee and Mukherjee 2020: 159; Kuhn 2002: 30; Sarkar and Utpal 2015: 11-12; Sunitha et al. 2018: 128; Tsoi et al. 2018: 568). These studies on the influence of music on physiological and psychological health have been done in a non-pandemic situation.

The most recently emerged pandemic, Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), has caused havoc across the world. COVID-19 was first reported towards the end of 2019 in Wuhan, China. It took a few months for the new strain of the virus (coronavirus), causing the disease to reach India through human carriers (infected peoples). In India, it was spread to a large number of peoples via human-to-human transmission and even significantly contributed to mortality. The Government of India deployed lockdown in order to limit the disease from spreading. Various examinations, including National Eligibility Test/Junior Research Fellowship (NET/JRF) for lecturer ship and/or research, were postponed for the time being to safeguard the health of students. It needs to be mentioned that the NET/JRF examination is quite challenging, and its preparation is stressful and leads to perpetual physical and mental tension. The examination requires intense focus and sound knowledge to qualify. Only 6% of the candidates in a particular category are declared "qualified" by the National Testing Agency (NTA). This examination was scheduled to be held June, but was postponed by the NTA in May, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was then supposed to be held in September. The significant restrictive changes in lifestyle like social distancing, and remaining confined at home due to lockdown, associated unpleasant situations, uncertainty about future and career are likely to induce psychological distress among the students.

Given the background, it was evident that though music is known to exert physiological and psychological benefits, its impact on psychological health in a pandemic situation like COVID-19 has not yet been substantially studied. Hence, this present study was framed with an aim to assess the impact of active, passive as well as both active-passive engagement in musical activity on emotional disturbances, in terms of psychological distress symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and stress, in NET/JRF aspirants, during the period of uncertainty about the examination, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Materials and Methods

Design of the study

The study was a cross-sectional study and relied on convenience sampling. The study was conducted between July 15 and July 25, 2020. Before the study, institutional ethical committee

approval was attained. A structured Google form was designed and was circulated in Facebook groups of NET/JRF aspirants of India. The form collected consent, necessary demographic information, and enquired - whether the subjects are engaged in any musical activity (singing/playing instruments/composing) or not, whether, in their daily life, they listen to music or not. Both the questions had yes/no as the answer options. If the subjects selected "yes" for any of the two queries, the form required them to choose the frequency (regular/infrequent), which best described their engagement to the musical activity or listening music. If the subjects selected "no" as their answer, the form allowed them to skip the question related to the frequency. Lastly, and most importantly, the form presented the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) questionnaire to the subjects.

Instrument

***Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) -21*:** The DASS-21 manual (Lovibond and Lovibond, 1995: 1-42) having the questionnaire and related details, contained 21 items (queries), seven items each to investigate depression, anxiety, and stress. The subjects were required to assign a score between 0, 1, 2, or 3 to indicate how much the item applied to the subjects over the past week, where "did not apply to me at all" equals to 0, "applied to me to some degree, or some of the time" equals to 1, "applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of the time" equals to 2, and "applied to me very much, or most of the time" equals to 3. The depression, anxiety, and stress scores was calculated by adding up the scores of their respective seven items. The possible score range was from 0- 21 for the separate seven items, and from 0- 63 for the total score of 21 items. A higher score indicates more psychological distress. The *doubled DASS-21 score* for each of the three-dimensions, that is, depression, anxiety, and stress were obtained by multiplying each of the raw scores of DASS-21 by two, to make them equivalent to full-length (42 items) DASS scores. It is to be mentioned that the values obtained by doubling the DASS-21 scale scores are known to be equivalent to the scores obtained by using the full-length DASS scale. Satisfactory psychometric property has been seen previously on the DASS-21 scale (Henry and Crawford 2005: 227-239).

Procedure

There were 150 Indian student respondents to the Google form. Based on the responses obtained, the subjects were allocated into four categories - a control group, active group, passive group, and an active-passive engagement group. Criteria were set for inclusion in these four groups. Participants who were neither involved in musical activities nor listened to music were allocated to the control group. Active group subjects were those who regularly participated in any musical activity. Passive group subjects were those who listened to music regularly, whether recorded or live but did not directly participate in musical activities. People who were found to be involved in both active and passive musical activity were included in the active-passive engagement group. People who were infrequent in the self-declared musical activity, were excluded from the study, as they did not fit into the criteria to be allocated under any of the four categories. Thus from the responses obtained using the Google form, only 139 (88 males and 51 females) participants were found suitable to be allocated to one of the four categories.

Statistical analysis

The data obtained were presented as mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Employing an one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), it was analyzed whether there was any significant variation in depression, anxiety, and stress scores between the control group, and three musical activity groups formed in the study. The post-hoc-Tukey's HSD (honestly significant difference) test was applied when ANOVA showed a significant difference. A p-value of < 0.05 or lower was considered significant. To find the relative change between the control group and the experimental group (active/passive/active-passive engagement group), the percentage change was computed: the difference between two means (experimental group mean and control group mean) that are to be compared was calculated. The difference was divided by the original number (control group mean), and the answer obtained was multiplied by a hundred.

Results

The age of the respondents in the study ranged from 22 to 27 years. The mean age of the respondents were 25 ± 4.1.

Table 1 showed that more males than females was the respondents of this study, and most of the respondents were master's degree holders.

Table 1: Characteristics of the study population

Variables	**Control Group** n= 38	**Active participant's group** n= 33	**Passive participant's group** n= 49	**Participant's engaged in both active and passive music** n=19
	Frequency	**Frequency**	**Frequency**	**Frequency**
Gender				
Male	20 (52.6)	19 (57.6)	38 (77.6)	11 (57.9)
Female	18 (47.4)	14 (42.4)	11 (22.4)	8 (42.1)
Educational Qualification				
Masters	29 (76.3)	26 (78.8)	34 (69.4)	15 (79.0)
Doctoral	9 (23.7)	7 (21.2)	15 (30.6)	4 (21.0)

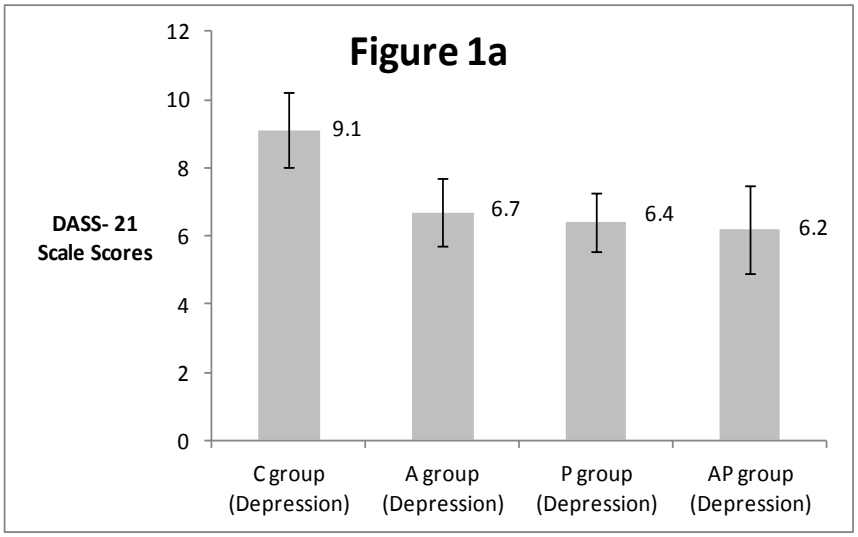
Note: The values within bracket are percentage (%).

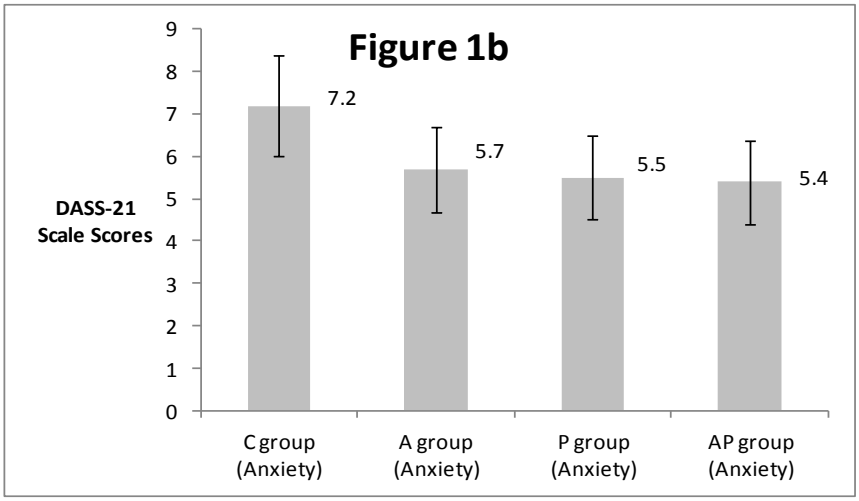
Table 2 presented the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the DASS-21 scale. **Figure 1a-c** shows the prime results, that is, the mean DASS-21 scores of depression, anxiety, and stress in a graphical manner. From Table 2, it was evident that in the active group, passive group, and active-passive engagement group, the mean values of the DASS-21 score of depression, anxiety, stress, and the total score, were found to be lower in comparison to the control group. Analysis with one way ANOVA showed that the observed lowering of the DASS-21 scores of depression, anxiety, stress, and the total score were highly statistically significant.

Table 2: Variation in the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) -21 scores between the control group, active group, passive group, and active-passive engagement group

Scale	Control group (Mean ± SD) n= 38	Active participant's group (Mean ± SD) n= 33	Passive participant's group (Mean ± SD) n= 49	Participant's engaged in both active and passive music (Mean ± SD) n= 19	F-value (p-value)
DASS-21					
Depression (D)	9.1 ± 1.1	6.7 ± 1.0	6.4 ± 0.87	6.2 ± 1.3	61.988 (p < 0.001)*
Anxiety (A)	7.2 ± 1.2	5.7 ± 1.0	5.5 ± 0.98	5.4 ± 0.98	22.049 (p < 0.001)*
Stress (S)	8.8 ± 1.8	6.9 ± 1.6	7.0 ± 1.5	6.6 ± 1.7	12.838 (p < 0.001)*
Total Score = D+A+S	25.2 ± 2.8	19.3 ± 1.7	18.9 ± 2.3	18.1 ± 1.8	72.12 (p < 0.001)*

*Note: * Significant using One-Way ANOVA.*





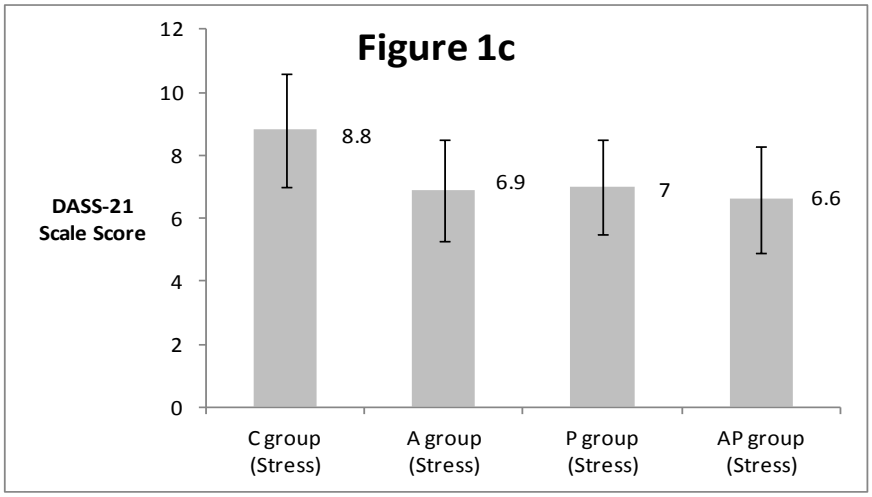


Figure 1a-c: DASS-21 score of depression, anxiety, and stress in the control group, active group, passive group, and active-passive engagement group (Note: C= Control group; A = Active group; P= Passive group; and AP = active-passive engagement group).

A post hoc comparison employing the Tukey's HSD test (**Table 3**) showed that the mean *depression score* of the active group (M = 6.7, SD = 1.0), passive group (M = 6.4, SD = 0.87), and active-passive engagement group (M = 6.2, SD = 1.3) were significantly lower from the control group (M = 9.1 , SD = 1.1).

Table 3: Multiple comparison- Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test: Depression scores of DASS-21

Pairwise comparison	Difference	Turkey HSD Q-statistic	95 % Confidence Interval		Critical Mean	p-value	Turkey HSD inference
			Lower CI	Upper CI			
C vs. A	2.34	13.6	1.715	2.979	0.63	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. P	2.69	17.2	2.123	3.271	0.57	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. AP	2.89	14.3	2.148	3.640	0.74	0.000	p < 0.001*
A vs. P	0.34	2.15	-0.248	0.947	0.59	0.43	p> 0.05 NS
A vs. AP	0.54	2.63	-0.217	1.311	0.76	0.25	p> 0.05 NS
P vs. AP	0.19	1.01	-0.519	0.915	0.71	0.89	p> 0.05 NS

Note:
C= Control group; A = Active group; P= Passive group; and AP = active-passive engagement group.
** Significant using Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test; NS = Not significant.*

A post hoc- Tukey's HSD test (**Table 4**) showed that the mean *anxiety score* of the active group (M = 5.7, SD = 1.0), passive group (M = 5.5, SD = 0.98), and active-passive engagement group (M = 5.4, SD = 0.98) were significantly lower from the control group (M = 7.2, SD = 1.2).

Table 4: Multiple comparison- Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test: Anxiety scores of DASS-21

Pairwise comparison	Difference	Turkey HSD Q-statistic	95 % Confidence Interval		Critical Mean	p-value	Turkey HSD inference
			Lower CI	Upper CI			
C vs. A	1.48	8.39	0.835	2.138	0.65	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. P	1.67	10.4	1.081	2.266	0.59	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. AP	1.71	8.18	0.941	2.480	0.77	0.000	p < 0.001*
A vs. P	0.19	1.11	-0.430	0.803	0.62	0.85	p> 0.05 NS
A vs. AP	0.22	1.04	-0.565	1.012	0.79	0.89	p> 0.05 NS
P vs. AP	0.04	0.18	-0.703	0.776	0.74	0.99	p> 0.05 NS

Note:
C= Control group; A = Active group; P= Passive group; and AP = active-passive engagement group.

** Significant using Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test; NS = Not significant.*

A post hoc- Tukey's HSD test (**Table 5**) showed that the mean *stress score* of the active group (M = 6.9, SD = 1.6), passive group (M = 7.0, SD = 1.5), and active-passive engagement group (M = 6.6, SD = 1.7) were significantly lower from the control group (M = 8.8, SD = 1.8).

Table 5: Multiple comparison- Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test: Stress scores of DASS-21

Pairwise comparison	Difference	Turkey HSD Q-statistic	95 % Confidence Interval		Critical Mean	p-value	Turkey HSD inference
			Lower CI	Upper CI			
C vs. A	1.96	6.97	0.928	2.999	1.03	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. P	1.86	7.28	0.922	2.803	0.94	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. AP	2.21	6.64	0.988	3.433	1.22	0.000	p < 0.001*
A vs. P	0.10	0.38	-0.879	1.080	0.98	0.99	p> 0.05 NS

Note:
C= Control group; A = Active group; P= Passive group; and AP = active-passive engagement group.
** Significant using Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test; NS = Not significant.*

A post hoc- Tukey's HSD test (**Table 6**) showed that the mean *total scores* of DASS- 21 of the active group (M = 19.3, SD = 1.7), passive group (M = 18.9, SD = 2.3), and active-passive engagement group (M = 18.1 , SD = 1.8) were significantly lower from the control group (M = 25.2 , SD = 2.8).

Table 6: Multiple comparison- Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test: Total scores of DASS-21

Pairwise comparison	Difference	Turkey HSD Q-statistic	95 % Confidence Interval		Critical Mean	p-value	Turkey HSD inference
			Lower CI	Upper CI			
C vs. A	5.82	15.36	4.426	7.214	1.39	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. P	6.24	18.14	4.979	7.512	1.27	0.000	p < 0.001*
C vs. AP	7.03	15.70	5.380	8.672	1.65	0.000	p < 0.001*
A vs. P	0.42	1.18	-0.894	1.744	1.32	0.83	p> 0.05 NS
A vs. AP	1.20	2.63	-0.481	2.892	1.69	0.25	p> 0.05 NS
P vs. AP	0.78	1.81	-0.802	2.364	1.58	0.75	p> 0.05 NS

*Note: C= Control group; A = Active group; P= Passive group; and AP = active-passive engagement group. * Significant using Post Hoc Tukey's HSD test; NS = Not significant.*

The DASS-21 mean scores of depression, anxiety, stress, and total score of the active group as compared with the control group are presented: depression (6.7 vs. 9.1), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 26.4 %; anxiety (5.7 vs. 7.2), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 20.8 %; stress (6.9 vs. 8.8), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 21.6 %; and the total score (19.3 vs. 25.2), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 23.4 %.

The DASS-21 mean scores of depression, anxiety, stress scores, and total score of the passive group as compared with the control group are presented: depression (6.4 vs.9.1), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 29.7 %; anxiety (5.5 vs. 7.2), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 23.6 %; stress (7.0 vs. 8.8), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 20.4 %; and the total score (18.9 vs. 25.2), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 25 %.

The DASS-21 mean scores of depression, anxiety, stress, and total score of the active-passive engagement group as compared with the control group is presented: depression (6.2 vs. 9.1), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 31.9 %; anxiety (5.4 vs. 7.2), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 25 %; stress (6.6 vs. 8.8), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 25 %; and the total score (18.1 vs. 25.2), which indicated the percentage decrease to be 28.2 %.

It should be noted that the DASS -21 scores were made equivalent to the full-length DASS scale scores by doubling. The doubled DASS-21 scores were exposed to the same statistical treatments as the DASS-21 scores. The obtained results are not presented in the manuscript since they mirrored the exact trend/pattern of results obtained using the DASS-21 scale. However, the summary statistics of the doubled DASS-21 scores are presented in **Table 7** to serve as reference values for future studies.

Table 7: Summary statistics (Mean and SD) of the Doubled DASS-21 Scores

Scale	Doubled DASS-21 Scores/ Standardised Scores [a]			
	Mean + SD	**Mean + SD**	**Mean + SD**	**Mean + SD**
Depression (D)	18.1 ± 2.1	13.4 ± 2.0	12.8 ± 1.74	12.4 ± 2.6
Anxiety (A)	14.4 ± 2.4	11.4 ± 2.0	11.0 ± 1.96	10.8 ± 1.96
Stress (S)	17.6 ± 3.6	13.8 ± 3.2	14.0 ± 3.0	13.2 ± 3.4
Total Score = D+A+S	50.4 ± 5.6	38.6 ± 3.4	37.8 ± 4.6	36.2 ± 3.6

As For the different groups, the raw scores of DASS- 21 were multiplied by two and then the mean and standard deviation were calculated to obtain the standardised score.

Discussion

The present study evaluated the impact of the engagement in musical activity (active/passive/active-passive engagement) on depression, anxiety, and stress, in a sample of NET/JRF aspirants, during a situation in which there were unprecedented delays and unpredictability about the said examination due to the COVID-19 health crisis.

The present study's findings clearly revealed that depression, anxiety, and stress levels were significantly less in subjects who reported either active or passive or active-passive engagement in musical activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it may be said that engagement in musical activities may bring notable improvements in the psychological health of students in hard times. A very recent foreign study conducted in Italy during the same pandemic found similar beneficial effects of music on stress and well-being in terms of improvement in tiredness, sadness, fear, and worries (Giordano et al. 2020: 1-6). However, unlike the present study, this foreign study considered studying only the impact of passive musical activity. Moreover, the foreign study was done on clinical staff's with a much broader age range (22-59 years), whereas the present study were done on NET/JRF aspirants and hence included younger (22 to 27 years) subjects only. The foreign study investigated the stress concerning the workplace (COVID-19 care hospital), whereas the present study explored psychological distress centering around the NET/JRF examination during a pandemic situation.

It should be noted that in the present study, apparently, the calculated relative percentage change between the control group and the experimental groups (active/passive/active-passive engagement group) indicated that passive musical engagement, as well as both active-passive engagement were somewhat more effective than the active musical engagement in lowering depression, anxiety and, stress. However, the post hoc examination of the means values of depression, anxiety and, stress in the different musical activity groups, following significant one- way ANOVA, indicated that neither of the musical activities was significantly more effective than the other.

An earlier study conducted in 2018 showed that passive musical activity may restrict behavioral problems and anxiety in older adults. The authors of this particular study further concluded that passive musical activity is more efficient and convenient to implement than active musical activity (Tsoi et al. 2018: 568). Earlier studies have also shown that Indian classical music effectively decreases depression, anxiety, and stress levels (Chatterjee and Mukherjee, 2019: 2008; Sunitha et al. 2018: 128) in a non-pandemic situation.

Other authors have raised concerns that the COVID-19 period may adversely affect the mental well-being of health professionals (Soklaridis et al. 2020: 133) and the general population (Roy et al. 2020: 1). Studies have also pinpointed that COVID-19 may universally contribute to depression, anxiety, stress, and there is a need to focus attention on dealing with mental health issues during the ongoing pandemic (Bhagat, 2020: S36). Hence, to support the restoring of psychological health, cost-effective and easily implementable measures are necessary. The evidence generated by the present study is a step forward in the direction of seeking an effective measure to promote mental health. It needs to be mentioned that music therapy is a proven method to uplift psychological health (Witusik and Pietras 2019: 240). This present study is possibly the first study on the Indian population to show that music has the potential efficacy in benefitting the psychological health of the aspirants of NET/JRF amidst the COVID-19 situation.

Based on existing literature, the improvement in psychological variables seen in the present study may be attributed to the decreased activity of the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis, leading to the lowering of the stress hormone, cortisol in the blood (Chanda and Levitin 2013: 179-186). Music is also known to bring positive changes in the emotional sphere by affecting the limbic system concerned with emotions (Dalla Bella et al. 2009: 376), attenuate stress caused from

environmental factors (Pfeifer et al. 2019: 68), and reinstate sympathetic and parasympathetic balance (Li and Dong 2012: 81-83). These physiological changes on exposure to musical activity lower tension, stress, anxiety, and promote positive feelings.

An earlier study has found that people engaged in active musical activity may have a better functioning immune system than people engaged in passive musical activity (Kuhn 2002: 30). Another study showed greater perceptions of enjoyment and comfort in participants of active musical activity than participants of passive musical activity (Silverman and Leonard 2012: 390). These previous studies lead to the notion that this present study will also show that the active participation in musical activity is more effective at affecting psychological health than passive participation. However, no such trend was seen in the present study, which made it clear that the observed results cannot be generalized across studies, owing to the differences in sample size, mode of musical engagement, research design and, several other factors.

There are certain limitations of this study- This study does not provide any evidence of causal nature. However, it gives possible explanations for the results based on available literature. Due to the ongoing coronavirus health crisis, no field surveys were conducted, and the study entirely depended on self-reports provided by the respondents over the web. Hence, biases may have crept into the results. This study did not take into consideration the intricacies of the musical activity of the subjects. Although the present study included males and females, the sample predominantly represented males.

Future studies should maintain a balance between the male and female ratios while sampling. More robust studies are needed to strengthen the findings of the study. Future studies may be undertaken to investigate the impact of different music styles and intensities on various psychological variables.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study provided valuable insights into the beneficial impact of active, passive, and active-passive musical activities on the psychological health of NET/JRF aspiring students in times of public health crisis. The findings suggest that during the COVID-19 crisis, or in a similar pandemic situation of the future, music may be employed as an effective non-pharmacological intervention or alternative intervention to prevent psychological health from deteriorating among students aspiring to appear in different examinations. This may lead to overall good performance in the examinations.

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New Forms of Discipline and Punishment and their Effectiveness in Schools of Kolkata: Voices from Classrooms

Rikhia Ghoshal

Abstract: This article deals with the issue of discipline and punishment in schools of Kolkata since the ban on corporal punishment through the RTE Act in 2009, thereby ending an age-old tradition in the processes of education and socialization of children. The article begins with a brief evolutionary overview of the commonly practiced forms of punishment in India and elsewhere. Using a qualitative methodology, the aim of the study is to first describe the current scenario of discipline and punishment in schools since the ban has been implemented andthen uncover the perceptions of teachers and students regarding their effectiveness for classroom order/discipline and socialization/moral development of students, which have then been discussed and analysed from a sociological perspective.

Keywords: *RTE Act; discipline; corporal punishment; spanking; socialization; emotional harassment.*

Introduction

It would be interesting to know that the oldest forms of punishment prevalent among adult humans, as per the law codes of Sumer in Mesopotamia (2100-2050 BCE),were rarely corporal and were geared more towards compensation (Roth et. al 1995).While the punishment of adults took time to become corporal, the punishment of children was always corporal. Kramer (1949) writes in Schooldays that the children in ancient Mesopotamia feared going to school because teachers were prone to beating them for the slightest infractions. The birth of mass schooling since capitalism further intensified corporal punishments and beliefs regarding their necessity were strengthened by Christianity. As mass schooling grew, it meant having to manage numerous children at the same time and this led to the emergence of the conception that "children should be controlled before they were to be taught" (Harris 1928: 16), thus normalizing the use of brute force in attaining control over students inside the classrooms.

In the ancient Indian scenario too, corporal punishment of students was not uncommon. However, more than punishment, stress was laid on discipline of students and punishment had a causal link to discipline in the traditional Indian educational system. For example, the Dharmasutras (tr. Olivelle,

1999) prescribed numerous rules of discipline for students such as facing the guru always and speaking to him with utmost reverence, sitting down with his permission, etc. Manu writes in Manusmriti, "[L]et him, when angry, not raise a stick against another man, nor strike (anybody) except a son or pupil; those two he may beat in order to correct them" (tr. Buhler, 1886: 26).This punishment, however, was to be mild and measured. In fact, teachers themselves were liable to face punishments if they did not perform their duties towards students properly. The punishment of the guru was usually the imposition of fines or the confiscation of fees or to be "punished like a thief" (Chatterjee, 1999: 31) if he did not follow the prescribed measures when physically punishing his students. Other Indian religions too did not prescribe harsh punishments of children. Buddhism prescribed removal of rights and freedoms or banishment from monastery as punishments (ibid.).In Islam too, while corporal punishment was allowed, that was supposed to be in a measured form much like with Hinduism (Peters, 2005). Brute corporal punishment of students as the dominant method of disciplining possibly started with Christian monastic education during the colonial times. The traditional caring and fatherly teacher was replaced by the dictatorial British school master who was in actuality a lowly officer of the regime, described by Kumar (2014) as the "meek dictator", who used brute force to discipline students and had no intentions of being a father-figure to the native boys considered inferior and uncivilized. Sen (2015), using children's literature in British Bengal, described different forms of brutal, painful physical punishments that had become prevalent in the educational system by that time such as intense beatings, placing bricks in their hands or making them stand on one leg with a dunce-cap on their heads, etc. These descriptions were, however, related to boys since girls were not allowed in schools.

Since the 17th century, changes began to be seen in the Western conceptions of childhood and the appropriate punishment of children, especially in the writings of Locke and Rousseau and an empathetic attitude emerged especially among the wealthier sections of society (Donnelly 2005). The unquestioned acceptance of the authority of teachers over children began to falter with "legal and cultural challenges to disciplinary discretion by school personnel as well as the more general demands for expansion of student rights, including freedom of speech, due process, and privacy"(Way 2011: 349-350). These ideas first travelled to India through the forces of colonization and since then the traditional protective and caring attitude towards students became novel in the colonial education system. A Western outlook towards childhood thus struck deep roots in many parts of the Indian society, especially among the English-educated middle classes and the elite. Child rights now became an important legal matter in India, especially after India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (UNCRC), thereby promising to uphold the rights, freedoms and dignity of children and always protecting them. One of the most important ways in which the Indian government has upheld its commitment towards child protection is by banning corporal punishment and mental harassment in schools through the Right to Education Act, 2009 (Section 17) in line with the UNCRC. This has brought about some major changes in the way in which school discipline and punishment are now understood and dealt with.

This study aims to find out what these changes are and how teachers and students feel about this change with respect to attaining discipline of students and socializing them.

Methodology

This study has been carried out using a thoroughly qualitative methodology guided by grounded theory as a sensitizing concept (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006). Students and teachers, male and female and from primary as well as secondary sections, were chosen from low-cost schools catering to the poor and lower-middle class clientele and expensive schools for the affluent and elite. The sampling strategy used in this research was theoretical sampling which aims at data saturation to arrive at the sample size. The sample size arrived at using convenience and snowball sampling was as follows: 7 teachers (3 from low-cost schools and 4 from expensive schools) and 31 students (8 for in-depth interviews out of whom 2 were from low-cost schools and 6 from expensive schools; 23 for focus group discussions out of whom 13 were from expensive schools and 10 from low-cost schools).In-depth interviews were used to gather data from secondary school students and from teachers and focus group discussions were resorted to for gathering data from primary school students. Data were analysed using by transcribing interviews and coding the transcriptions, memo-writing and theoretically sorting conceptual categories that emerged.

New Forms of Discipline and Punishment: An Overview

With the ban on corporal punishment, punishments in schools have suddenly taken on new character. No longer is the usual slap on the cheek or the back commonly seen in classrooms. Instead, new methods of establishing and maintaining order and socialization of children are coming about, such as surveillance, counselling, giving rewards and incentives, etc. in line with the government's vision of protecting children and their rights. These methods, however, are most often seen in schools catering to the affluent sections of society. Simultaneously, adults and many older adolescents have lamented about the "loss of childhood" in contemporary times, corresponding to changes in the way discipline is understood or practiced. Due to the lack of strict punishments, students have gained power according to most teachers to the extent that they can even make false complaints against teachers, make fun of them on social media, use abusive language or even attack them in some cases. The expensive schools now aim to prevent the occurrence of indiscipline altogether by taking help of technology in the form of CCTV camera surveillance to monitor students and their conduct within school premises as well as through regular checks. If such monitoring fails to ensure disciplined conduct, non-threatening forms of punishment are used such as light scolding, excluding errant students from classroom discussions, giving them extra homework, making them sit on separate benches (many of these schools have designated benches for the punished students in the junior sections), or, rarely, sending the offenders outside the classroom or deducting minimum marks from tests. Parents are called to school only when situations are very serious such as, students found drinking alcohol inside the classroom or carrying pornography to school which are becoming more and more frequent according to students and

teachers. Suspension of such students was not too uncommon. In general, however, these schools encouraged teachers to ignore indiscipline as much as possible and instead give students rewards as encouragement to do better. Even so, interestingly, it was frequently reported by students that some teachers resort to using "emotional harassment", "verbal abuse" and "bullying" as forms of non-corporal punishment. It was reportedly the senior female teachers who most often resorted to such means indicating a gender bias in the practice of punishment. While respondents did not explicitly explain it, responses suggested a power struggle in the classroom vis-à-vis female teachers but not male teachers who were often viewed as friends, especially by male students. With female students, male teachers ensured limited interaction fearing disciplinary action against themselves for complaints of indecent behaviour, which is not too infrequent according to the teachers. In comparison, female teachers were considered as parental figures by students and they were open to accepting punishment from such teachers as long as it was "justified" and warranted. Female teachers, especially those nearing retirement age and therefore at times losing patience to deal with offensive conduct of students with softer methods that do not seem to work, want to show students that they still have power in the classroom and resort to such non-corporal punishments which are considered as "harsh" and "unjustified" by students due to their lasting negative psychological impacts which, according to many students, is harder to deal with than physical punishments. Victims of such punishments were mostly girls because they cannot be physically punished due to ethical reasons, as a teacher explained.

The scenario of discipline and punishment was found to be quite different in low-cost schools. Indiscipline in these schools included truancy, dropping out, indulging in smoking apart from general naughtiness like interrupting lessons, not doing the assigned work, destroying school property, etc. To deal with these issues of indiscipline, it was found that physical punishments are still quite popular in spite of the ban and no disciplinary action is taken against teachers who use such methods. One of the teachers revealed that this is because most teachers usually have good political networks which they can use to prevent any action against them even if complaints are made against them, something which private school teachers are unable to do making them far more vulnerable to legal and media trials than these teachers.Beating students, making them run in the sun or not allowing them to go to the toilet were some of the most commonly used forms of punishment in these schools used equally by teachers of all ages and genders but mostly with primary school male students. Responses from students show that there are almost no teachers in these schools who do not resort to corporal punishments or verbal abuses. The scenario of discipline and punishment in these schools, therefore, is quite different from that in schools catering to the affluent pointing to a clear class divide in experiences of discipline and punishment although gender and age also play a role.

On the basis of this cursory overview of types of punishments being practiced, we move on to uncovering perceptions of their effectiveness.

Punishments and their Effectiveness: Voices from the Classroom

While the issues of discipline and ways to tackle them are quite different in different kinds of schools as outlined above, the perceptions of effectiveness regarding the methods of tackling, i.e., punishment, were rather linear for the most part. In what follows, teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the new forms of punishment are uncovered.

(a) Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness in Discipline Maintenance: Students of private and expensive/elite schools included in this study have felt that the changed laws regarding the permissible forms of punishment have changed the disciplinary culture of schools in general and reduced the effectiveness of punishments significantly. Surprisingly, many of the student respondents themselves said that they would rather have some degree of physical punishment because it would "create fear in the minds of the defaulters of school rules so that they think twice before repeating it", as a high school boy of an elite school put it. Involving parents is something that worked well before, no longer works for most students. Punishments like being removed from the classroom also do not work, especially with older male students, since they tend to "enjoy" such punishments. A couple of students even admitted to deliberately misbehaving so that they are sent out of the classroom and can play football. Positive disciplining techniques like making errant students monitors or leaders of study groups, also does not seem to teach them discipline. It was found that such methods, while alright when dealing with primary school children, may lead to antagonisms in higher classes between those who feel they deserved that position for being good in conduct and academics and those who were made monitors as punishment. Counselling, especially on its own, also was touted as an ineffective method of attaining discipline. As one student said, the only time counselling works is when teachers use it along with physical punishments. He said that students in his school have developed a "positive mentality" towards corporal punishment because they are always counselled and reasoned with while being corporally punished. It is interesting that this student was so badly hit by a teacher that he is now almost deaf in one ear and yet he speaks positively of physical punishments. He felt such a method is the most effective in attaining discipline because it creates fear. Most students believed that there was a need to re-instil fear in them so that they learn respect and decency even as laws and school boards are trying to create an enjoyable environment in schools so that students have nothing to fear. Using mental harassment to control and exert power over students and create fear in them, which is also common, has absolutely no effectiveness in either socializing or disciplining. Quite a few students in fact said that they would rather be spanked than be verbally humiliated and bullied by teachers which leave a lasting negative mental effect on them. Most of the student respondents have said that they feel ashamed and embarrassment from being "publicly humiliated" and that it creates a distance between the teacher and the student. This distance, most have said, is especially harmful academically as they cannot approach those teachers to seek guidance being too scared or ashamed or sometimes too angry. The punishments that do seem to work, at least temporarily and more with

younger and female students, were threats of being suspended or expelled from school or confiscating answer scripts of students caught cheating during exams. However, such methods are also gradually being eradicated. At the same time, some respondents, mostly female, felt that the removal of corporal and other extreme forms of punishment from school is a good move. They were also children who have never or rarely faced strict or corporal punishment at home. They recognized that students nowadays "take things to heart too easily" and therefore strict punishments, while having their benefits, can easily be much more harmful for the new generation of students compared to students ten years ago. They felt that counselling is a good alternative to punishment while recognizing that it is not used effectively in most schools. Responses revealed that most counsellors appointed by schools act as moral science teachers and career counsellors and students rarely visit them for their problems.

In general, in the expensive and private schools, the students seemed to dislike all those methods of punishment that displayed power of the teacher. According to most of them, they are willing to accept the imposition of authority as long as the teacher is justified in punishing them. It is apparently accepted especially easily if the teacher is liked by the students. In that case, it is as if the teacher is given parental authority and students are willing to accept punishments and displays of authority from them because they have that "right", which teachers who are unjust and humiliating in their methods of punishing do not have.

In low-cost schools, since most teachers still resort to harsh punishment, not much has changed in terms of implementation of new laws and perceptions of their effectiveness. Students in these schools have felt that corporal punishment is necessary for proper discipline and perhaps it is not surprising that they feel this way since, according to their responses, they are used to this form of disciplining at home as well as in school. It was a small minority of female students who said that teachers must first resort to reasoning and then escalate to corporal punishment if that does not work. The question of effectiveness of new, mild forms of punishment does not seem to arise in these schools since harsh punishments are still a reality and openly practiced with rare instances of protests by parents or students.

(b) Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness in Discipline Maintenance: Just like with students, the vast majority of teachers in schools catering to the wealthy and elite sections of Kolkata also negatively evaluated the currently practiced forms of discipline and punishment for students' discipline. Preventive measures or low-impact punishments have increased the frequency, intensity and offensiveness of indiscipline mainly because they do not instil fear in students according to most respondents. Teachers also felt, like students, that punishments that were very effective less than a decade ago are now practically useless to discipline students. For example, most teachers said that calls from schools regarding students' disciplinary conduct either never reach parents or, even if they do, most parents choose to ignore them by citing lack of time to visit the school or lack of knowledge about any such notes. This difference between the parents today and parents from

five or seven years ago, teachers said, adversely affected discipline in the classroom since students are "too pampered" at home by parents who do not invest much time in teaching appropriate behaviour to their children. When asked about counselling, teachers did say that it is a helpful tool but they also said that such a method is not useful if students do not fear teachers a little for which some form of strict verbal and light physical punishments are best. In low-cost schools, however, counselling and any other positive disciplining techniques were practically absent. Teacher respondents corroborated students' responses by accepting that many of them still do use corporal punishment to discipline students. These teachers were generally not convinced about the ban on corporal punishment to discipline students since they felt that physical punishments are the only "language" that poor and working class students understand and respond to, as one teacher put it. Most teachers in both categories of schools said that teachers "need" to punish students as an essential method of keeping the class in order and also to teach them proper moral behaviour. In fact, one said, by bringing an analogy with the ancient guru-shishya system, that it is their "right" to do so. He also said, in the same breath, however, that no teacher "likes" to be punitive with students but students, especially nowadays, do not leave a choice. Therefore, most teachers feel the need and the right to punish but only some are able to fulfil their need and right as explained next.

While punishment of students has been receiving more concern than before, the control over teachers' conduct that the new laws and policies are trying to achieve also means that punishment of teachers is now a reality. Possibilities of punishment for teachers including losing jobs in the elite, expensive schools are high since they are constantly monitored. For fear of disciplinary action, teachers said that they are generally wary of how they behave with the students and stay distanced from them, following rules mechanically. Low-cost schools, being run with minimal infrastructure, are unable to monitor teachers' behaviour leading to the continuation of corporal punishment. According to a teacher of one such school, laws are "selectively implemented" in these schools mainly because of political networks of teachers and a general lack of interest among teachers to change the experiences of students. In general then, the effectiveness of the new laws in case of teachers' conduct has been inconsistent. Schools for the poor are unable to ensure protection of children while the schools catering to the privileged sections have quite effectively moulded teacher behaviour to fit the laws. The change, however, has largely been superficial – teachers follow laws to be safe from punishment and no ideological shift seems to have come about regarding the ideal forms of punishment of children. An overwhelming majority of respondents including students believed that some amount of corporal punishment is necessary for proper disciplining and socialization. This is why almost every teacher felt that the laws do not have any practical validity since teachers are now expected to teach discipline to defiant children without having adequately strong tools.

(c) Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Punishment and School/Teachers in Socialization: Schools and teachers have the duty of citizen training and have been important secondary agents of child socialization. However, the current generation of students across different kinds of schools do

not think that the school, teachers or punishment have much of a role to play in their character development. The overwhelming majority of students felt that punishment tends to label students and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to be viewed beyond that label, thereby failing to create any positive impacts on students' minds. Most felt that the teacher and punishment have a role to play in socialization, if at all, only for the very small children who are still in their formative years. Adolescent boys and girls felt that their personalities take shape through influences from various sources outside the school rather than through what the school teaches either through rules and regulations or through punishments. Influences from the media and social networking sites are much more crucial in shaping their personalities, in inculcating habits, behaviours, mannerisms and tastes. One reason that came out quite often for teachers not being important in socialization of older students was that most students felt that teachers hardly give them time or interact with them to get to know them and students were not fond of such teachers. In fact, responses show that the ability of the teacher to socialize depends on whether students feel the teacher is "likeable", "caring", "attentive" and "respectful" towards them. Most students felt that teachers are too quick to judge or ignore them and students do not feel respect for those teachers to learn social values or habits from them or from punishments meted out by them. Rather, students felt that it is the punishment at home that is more effective in socialization and personality formation. Most students felt that parents have greater "right" to punish their own children compared to teachers. One boy gave three specific reasons for this – (i) teachers often punish based on a biased judgement of students but parents would never do that; (ii) teachers are often unnecessarily rude with students but parents can never do that with their own children; (iii) parents' entire attention is only on their own children and it is not spread over forty to fifty children, therefore ensuring greater care and concern for the individual child after punishment which teachers cannot afford. The students also said that the emotional impact of punishment at home is much less than in school since the visibility of being punished at school is often embarrassing and humiliating for them. Teachers either do not "care" about the harmful emotional impact of their behaviours or cannot care because of lack of time due to the pressures of finishing the syllabus, etc.As such, students felt that teachers and punishment in school do not have any significant role to play in socialization, especially in secondary school.

(d)Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Punishment and School/Teachers in Socialization: Teachers in the elite and expensive schools have felt that in the current times, their role in child socialization is important but, at the same time, reduced. It is important because these parents do not usually have sufficient time to give to their children due to pressures of the economy. These children are left either unattended or in the care of "ayahs" or babysitters for many hours in the day at home and "the quality of what they are learning in this situation is not at all up to the mark", according to one teacher. She and the other teachers interviewed from these schools felt that it is the teachers' job to step in and ensure that children are learning proper habits and behaviours in such a scenario. However, teachers' role in child socialization has evidently reduced because they have

developed a wary attitude towards students for fear of complaints and penalties in the post RTE Act scenario.

In contrast, teachers of low-cost schools do still seem to have a say in how students behave in class but they also said over and over again that the school alone cannot do much in character building and socialization and that parents must also play a part in it. The poor and working-class parents are often violent and abusive with their children which, teachers said, poses as a problem in their endeavours to create personalities that can surpass the atrocities of home. This is why a teacher said that they "have to be" violent with the students to socialize them because that is the only language they understand. Teachers use corporal punishment on students caught cheating, lying, smoking, etc. which are considered immoral and teachers believe it is their duty to ensure inculcation of good moral values in children. At the same time however, another teacher pointed out that character development of students is not something that is given serious attention to in these schools. To illustrate, he talked about a colleague who busies herself with her mobile phone in class, ignoring students who are being indiscipline, abusive and violent. "She doesn't even educate them, forget about socializing them", he said. Therefore, in low-cost schools, punishment does still play a significant role in socialization of students although it is not often that the aim of punishment is to socialize. It is important to note that many students agreed that physical punishments stop them from repeating such behaviours, which was corroborated by teachers.

It is clear that most respondents included in this study have felt that to effectively deal with the disciplinary problems that contemporary childhood has thrown up, the older forms of punishment would have been most suitable. Not only teachers but even students have harped on the fact that light corporal punishment or strict reprimanding are never meant to harm students and are effective ways of ensuring that children learn discipline. It is ironic that while the state tries to protect children from corporal punishments, the children themselves want to revive such punishments.

Analysing the Perceptions of Effectiveness

To analyse the perceptions of respondents related to the effectiveness of current forms of punishment in discipline and socialization, Diana Baumrind's works are important. For Baumrind (1997), spanking, unlike other forms of corporal punishment, is effective and non-violent since it is administered with an open palm and not aimed to inflict injury. She cited experimental studies by Rosen, O'Leary, Joyce, Conway, & Pfinner (1984) to reiterate that light forms of punishments or reprimands are excellent in controlling student behaviour, provided the teacher-student relationship is positive. She termed such forms of punishment as *prudent negative consequences* and characterized them as "consistent, immediate, calm, private, and specific" (Baumrind, 1997: 179). Students' responses from this study show that they prefer prudent negative consequences, including light corporal punishment, from teachers they are fond of, proving Baumrind's theory right. Students felt that if teachers are caring and have friendly, close relations with the students, then they do not feel humiliated or threatened by the punishments. As one of them said, their

"mentalities" are moulded in such a manner that they are not adversely affected when their teachers use harsher forms of punishment which, they felt, are necessary and effective in disciplining students.

The lighter punishments that are used in place of corporal punishments are usually not effective because they are often not administered with the intent to correct. Teachers nowadays keep a distance from students to keep themselves safe and disciplining children to correct their mistakes is not a priority for most teachers, as responses show. Moreover, the tendency of many teachers to bully students emotionally because they cannot use punishments is perceived negatively by students who felt it was a deliberate attempt to display power over students. These forms of punishment may fall under Baumrind's (1997) category of *imprudent negative consequences* which are "reprimands delivered late, inconsistently, explosively, publicly, and non specifically" (ibid.). The bullying of students in public, often by bringing up topics that are non-specific, i.e., not related to the issue at hand, often using abusive or explosive language has been reported by students, especially girls. Such teachers have been described as power-mongers. Larzelere and Baumrind (2010) opined that "the most detrimental forms of power assertion were verbal hostility and psychological control" (85). This is in line with the responses of students who have said that they would rather be spanked than be psychologically punished. Moreover, while light corporal punishment has been designated as the most effective means of disciplining and socializing students, the students have also said that such measures must be accompanied by the use of reasoning to be truly effective. As Baumrind (1996) explains,

> The use of a reason in a disciplinary confrontation broadens the context in which compliance is expected by generalizing from a specific act to a rule governing a larger class of behaviour … inductive reasoning accompanied by the exercise of explicit control induces internalization of the norm underlying the directive more than the use of inductive reasoning alone … The use of reason accompanied by a display of power conveys to the child that, to satisfy the parent, adherence to a rule of appropriate conduct is required, even in her absence … By being paired with punishment, reasoning becomes a discriminative stimulus that noncompliance will be punished. Once this connection has been established, reasoning alone may suffice to obtain compliance. (410-411)

Even though Baumrind wrote this in the context of parent-child discipline and punishment, the same can be said for the teacher-student context as well. Data from this study prove Baumrind's thesis right once again.

Quite a few of the respondents, however, were happy with the changed laws that prohibit physical punishment and mental harassment. This is because these respondents felt that it is difficult to

determine at what point spanking or scolding might be conceived as abusive by a student. Kazdin and Benjet (2003) say that,

> Child abuse … can exert bio-chemical, functional, and structural changes in the brain (eg., changes in cerebral volume and increased or decreased reactivity to various neurotransmitters; Glaser, 2000). Some of these changes have psychological concomitants (eg., changes in reactivity to stress and in working memory) … it is not clear whether, how, or at what threshold the brain makes the distinction between child abuse and spanking. As a result, the circumstances under which spanking might also have deleterious effects is uncertain. (102)

Teachers and some students, especially female, have said time and again that today's children have a low threshold of tolerance of pain compared to what children had before. This could be a result of the various changes in childhood that have made instant gratification and near complete protection from adult authority the new normal. When childhoods have become more fragile due to such influences, there is no saying, as many respondents recognized, which child will take even the slightest punishments and displays of authority as abuse. Thus, these few respondents have felt that the new forms of disciplining like counselling, giving errant children greater responsibilities or rewarding students for good behaviour are safer options even though the effectiveness of these methods is not satisfactory.

In Baumrind's (1996) opinion, character "consists of positive and cultivated habits of social responsibility, moral commitment, and self-discipline that provide the internal structure of conscience, regulating inner thoughts and volitions" (406). School rules, teachers and punishment have traditionally been important agents in developing characters of students, often using punishment, until the laws changed and teachers can no longer punish as needed. This has meant that character formation in school is not as strong as before because teachers lack freedom to take matters of socialization into their own hands. It is only the odd teacher who has been able to establish positive relations with the students who is given some role to play in socializing because students accept the authority of these teachers. Such exceptional and rare teachers fall under the category of what may be called *authoritative teachers*. In contrast, the *authoritarian teacher*, who is demanding of students and is not permissive of any leeway and freedoms, is not given power by the students to have any significant impact on them. According to students' responses, it is the authoritarian teacher who is most commonly found in schools who punish students on the basis of prejudices and in ways that are humiliating. Students tend to resist authoritarian practices of disciplining or socialization and, by their own acknowledgement, have no respect for such teachers. Arum and Way (2003) have written in this regard that,

> If the teacher's moral authority is doubted, then respect for social values and obligation to obey may fail to develop within the child, an

> outcome which is important not only for school order but ultimately for the general social order as well. Hence, while the internalization of moral authority may be the ultimate goal and the most efficient mechanism of social order, the legitimization of teacher authority is the necessary first step. Without teacher authority, socialization is less than effective. (168)

Such undermining has come at a time when the role of parents in socialization has reduced to a large extent due to the demands of the job market. Teachers are acutely aware of this but they cannot step in since they are not given the freedom to discipline and socialize anymore by law. Arum and Way (2003) say, "the school is the primary nonfamilial social institution (other than perhaps organized religion) that embodies the principals, structures, and rules of a larger society" (171). To them,

> The moral authority of school discipline is critical in fostering students" ability to learn socially appropriate behaviours and values so they can become healthy individuals and productive citizens. (186)

Teachers included in this study have said, in line with Arum and Way's findings, that schools and teachers need to be freed from external control to restore the legitimacy of teachers. Instead, the state is invading more and more aspects of education through new laws implemented by school boards and monitored by school managements.

Responses have also suggested that the perception of ineffectiveness is not uniformly felt by all stakeholders. A discernible variation in perceptions of effectiveness was seen by gender. Female students, for the most part, were more receptive of the changes than male students were. As Hurwitz & Smithey (1998) said, an individual's perceptions related to "crime and punishment are often thought to flow from feelings of vulnerability" (90). The female gender is much more vulnerable in our society than the male gender is. This is why they are more conforming with the rules of society and the laws of the state. Not only that, it is also seen that more women are generally negatively oriented towards violence than men are. The authors say,

> Men's responses to moral quandaries tend to conform to an "ethic of justice", which emphasizes individual rights and relies on "absolute rules of truth and fairness" (Gilligan, 1982: 166). Conversely, women's responses tend to suggest an "ethic of care", in which the focus is on "society as an interdependent and interconnected web of personal relationships; from this perspective the moral or just behaviour entails actively attempting to nurture and protect others and relationships among them" (Worden 1993: 206). At the base of the ethic of care is concern for protecting the vulnerable. (Hurwitz & Smithey, 1998: 93)

The ethic of care, the intolerance of violence and the need to protect the vulnerable are typically results of socialization. Girls are generally taught to not only be submissive but also nurture and care for others. The fact that women experience motherhood which essentially entails caring for another individual has made women primarily caregivers, nurturers and protectors. That might explain why girls are mostly negatively oriented to the use of violence in discipline, punishment and socialization of children. Women are socialized to "see strength in connection and nurturance" while men are socialized to be more separated, independent and autonomous (ibid.). Boys are socialized using "power-oriented techniques" (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977 in Hurwitz & Smithey 1998) which explains why more boys than girls included in this study wanted the revival of corporal punishment which includes a more direct display of power. Women are much more accepting of "compassion policies" as Hurwitz & Smithey call it, that are based on the ethic of care which might explain why they are more receptive of counselling as a method of dealing with indiscipline. However, while this is the general trend, it is also important to note that girls have often also said that they would prefer an escalation technique of disciplining that may begin with reasoning and counselling but can be notched up to the use of physical punishments if needed. Female teachers have also been labelled as more prone to punishment by students. This shows that it is important to look at the issue of gendered perceptions of punishment in terms of "emphasis and degree" (ibid.: 96) rather than as universal, absolute givens. This point is explained even better when the factor of class is combined with gender. While girls being educated in the expensive schools of Kolkata have been strongly against the use of corporal or other harsh punishments, most girls from schools catering to the poor and lower-middle class population are open to the idea of physical punishments even if as a last resort. This can again be explained by the fact that socializations are obviously different for girls coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. In privileged families, girls are usually disciplined verbally or through the removal of amenities while in poorer families they are often harshly reprimanded or even corporally punished even at home, just like boys. Thus, perceptions of effectiveness of corporal punishments vary by degree and emphasis not only between genders but also within genders depending upon the intersection of a variety of factors like age or class.

Students have also understood that since laws are on their side, the authority of teachers and the school can be disregarded with minimum harm to the self, eroding teachers' legitimacy beyond the realm of test-based knowledge disbursement. Legitimacy of a teacher's power is based on perceptions of justice and fairness especially in adolescent students who have developed a definitive world view. This corresponds with Kohlberg's (1958) fifth stage of moral development where a contract between parties in a social interaction situation is rooted in feelings of fairness, a sense of equality and a reciprocal relationship. When teachers do not base their disciplinary tactics on fairness and equality, students develop feelings of anger and vengeance towards them. Even though most students end up accepting the punishment, their feelings of negativity towards such teachers makes them behave disrespectfully with them or avoid them altogether. The situation is

different with younger students who have much greater respect for teachers' authority and are obedient to teachers' instructions and fearful of teachers' anger and punishments. This corresponds to the first stage of Kohlberg's model – it is a punishment and obedience-oriented stage. The main aim of students at a young age is to avoid punishments by obeying orders and living up to the expectations of teachers as best as possible. This is why, in case of younger students who are not yet as completely aware of the laws and their rights, punishment or the threat of it can effectively discipline and aid in socialization or at least habit formation. As students grow older, their belief in the effectiveness of punishment is largely determined by their perception of the legitimacy of the punisher which, in turn, seems to be determined mostly by students' perceptions of fairness, justice and equality and fondness for the concerned teacher.

Overall, whether or not students feel the need for corporal punishment, what is certain is that the changing laws have instilled a belief among children that school rules are no longer sacred and can be violated since they are rarely punished seriously for breaking rules.

Conclusion

Ground realities show that there seems to be a lacuna in the implementation of laws and their internalization at an ideological level among the stakeholders which is why perceptions of effectiveness of these laws are mostly negative and the respondents want a revival of the old system of discipline and punishment. The lag has resulted in lowered involvement and investment of teachers in students' discipline and socialization simply because they want to protect themselves from serious consequences in this new environment where they are constantly controlled and watched. It is a matter of survival of the fittest and it seems from teachers' responses that the fittest teachers are the ones who keep the greatest distance from the students. This distance is felt by students and, ironically, is cited as the reason behind their belief that teachers do not have a role to play in their socialization or disciplining.

A sociological study aiming to uncover the realities of discipline and punishment in Indian schools and explaining them with the help of stakeholders' own evaluations of these realities is hard to find in Indian academic circles. As such, this study hopes to fill that gap in literature by studying this issue at a time when children's safety and their rights are matters of serious concern the world over in academic circles and beyond. This study is also throwing light on the problems in the implementation of laws which directly affects the core stakeholders of the education system, viz. teachers, students, parents and school management, who would be able to benefit from studies like this and better implement the rules and laws.Being a thoroughly theoretical study, it is beyond the scope of this paper to make suggestions regarding a model disciplinary culture that would be able to deal with the challenges of discipline that modern childhood has been throwing up while being in line with the larger goals of the Indian government regarding the ideal education system as well as keeping intact the traditional relations of respect between teachers and students as well as the larger community. However, by using this study and others like this to get an idea about the ground

realities and their theoretical explanations, such models may be attempted by applied sociologists and policy makers. This study is only a starting point regarding the matter of discipline and punishment of children and much more in-depth and extensive studies need to be conducted to get a better idea of the condition of discipline and punishment in different schools of India, at rural and urban levels, so that policies can be strengthened and be made actually useful without too many serious negative consequences.

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The Cultural Importance of River Island Majuli: The Living Heritage of Assam

Piyasi Bharasa

Abstract: Majuli, the river island is situated on the north-eastern part of Assam state on the River Brahmaputra. The island is famous for the *Vaishnavite* culture owing to its typical role towards living heritage in the region. The *Vaishnavite* faith was initiated in Assam by the Guru, Srimanta Shankardeva in the 15th Century, which is being continued as the foundation of cultural practices in the Majuli. The living heritage of Majuli island consists of drama, music, poetry and dance along with the performing art forms, which are in ritualistic practices only within the premises of the *Sattra*. Every year a large number of visitors and tourists visit the island to witness the *Sattras* and its multi-colored cultural heritage. Majuli was included in the 'Tentative List' of World Heritage Site (WHS) under cultural category at 28th Annual Session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee (WHC) held at Suzhou, China. Majuli Island was declared as the first island district of India by the Government of Assam on 8th September, 2016. The present research focuses on the living V*aishnavite* cultural heritage perspectives of the island and its tourism potentiality.

Keywords: *Island, Satras, Vaishnavite Culture, Living Heritage, Tourism*

1.0 Introduction

The performing art forms in ritualistic practices in the Majuli Island are considered as intangible cultural heritage, which is practiced through generations. Components of intangible heritage include ethnicity, cultural practices, representations, knowledge, skills and expressions continuing through several generations. Heritage contributes to a sense of identity to the communities. This is manifested in the form of a continuous mode of recreation in consonance with respective environmental perspectives. Intangible cultural heritage is also described as "living heritage" or "living culture"[1]. Majuli is a home to *Sattras* (monasteries) of Vaishnavite culture and is considered as an example of living heritage. There are many other living traditions in the State of Assam. Majuli is at centre to such diverse cultural practices nourished by the valuable knowledge and tradition of the Vaishnavite culture. The island was formed in the lap of the Brahmaputra River draining through many of the north-eastern states. The study deals with the living *Sattra* cultural heritage of Majuli and the associated cultural tourism potential in the Assam state.

1.1 Methodology

The current study is dealt with the practices of *Sattra* culture, related and intangible heritage and associated tourism perspectives of the Majuli Island. Secondary data sources form the basis of this research. Though a number of research papers were published on the subject, the specific study focusing on the tangible and intangible heritage of Majuli Island are yet to be explored. The present social status of local inhabitants and the communities living in the island coupled with their cultural perspectives have been taken into account for this research in the qualitative dimensions.

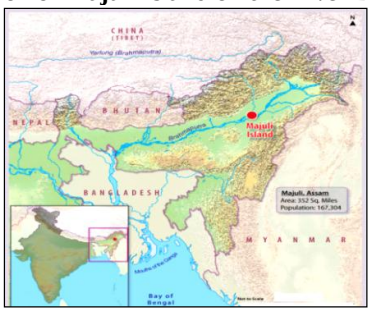
2.0 Discussion

2.1 The River Brahmaputra and Majuli Island

The River Brahmaputra is originating from the Trans-Himalayan region situated at about 100 km towards south-east of the Mapam Lake within the jurisdiction of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China (Fig.1). Brahmaputa is the seventh largest tropical river of the world (Tandon and Sinha, 2007)**.** Even though the total length of the River Brahmaputra exceeds the length of River Ganga by about 2,900 km but only 725 km of the course of Brahmaputra lies within the Indian Territory. The entire course of the Brahmaputra passes through the countries of Tibet, China, India and Bangladesh. The river transports huge sediment, flux of around 852.4 t/km/year, in Bangladesh (Singh, 2006).

The erosion of the Mountain Himalayas contributes huge sediment influx to the Brahmaputra River. The slope of the mountain carry the sediment influx to the foothills and thereafter it is stored in the valley of Assam state as the alluvial deposits (Thorne et. al, 1993; Garzanti et. al, 2004). The large catchment areas belonging to the narrow Brahmaputra basin in Assam is responsible for frequent flooding as parts of it experience exceedingly heavy precipitation. Recent scientific work is focusing on the understanding of hydrology[2] of the Brahmaputra, which is useful for effective management of the watersheds and mitigation of the flood hazards. Many large alluvial islands have been created by huge alluvial reaches of the Brahmaputra and quite a few of them are more than a century old and populated as well.

Fig.1. Location of Majuli Island on the River Brahmaputra



Source Modified https://www.mapsofindia.com/answers/india/biggest-river-island-india

The schemes pertaining to the control of flood and installation of new embankments were started after 1954. For example, the Teesta Barrage Project is meant for addressing dual schemes like flood protection and irrigation. The Assam Arakhan foreland basin system includes the upper reaches of the valley of River Brahmaputra (De Celles and Giles, 1996). The island Majuli and its adjacent places are belonging to this system. The word 'Majuli' can be explained as 'the land in between two parallel rivers' and the same has been substantiated through the fact that the island was formed in the meeting point of the Brahmaputra and its anabranches. The entire district can be classified both as rural and agrarian. The land area of the island may be categorized respectively as; about 32237.16 hectares, about 14834.66 hectares and around 7671. 23 hectares as lands suitable for cultivation, remains always submerged in water and completely non-productive. Total 22 `Char areas' are encompassing the area of 5939.01 hectares and in addition to this around 61153.09 hectares of land is demarcated as the reserved land for government. Very small land holder farmers are having very less land (around 0.95 hector of land) for cultivation (Das, 2017). Even though the farmers are holding very less size of land for cultivation, the lands are blessed with conspicuous fertility, which is recommendable for producing main crops like potato, paddy, mustard, pulses, wheat and sugarcane coupled with the seasonal vegetables and fruits grows in copious extent.

2.2 Location of Majuli

The Majuli is situated in the lap of River Brahmaputra and is formed within the meeting point of both the Brahmaputra and Lohit rivers. The island is located in between the $26^0$39'57.6" & $27^0$16'19.2"N Latitudes and $93^0$34'12" & $94^0$42'3.6"E Longitudes. Altitude is 84.5 meters above mean sea level (a msl). Stratigraphic succession is observed along the walls of the deep wells installed in the vicinity of the island. This shows that the sub-surface geological formations are belonging to the Paleocene–Eocene age (Ranga Rao, 1983).

Majuli is encircled by River the Kherkutia Suti along with the Subansiri River and the Brahmaputra River on the north and south respectively. Majuli Island manifests through its characteristic geological estrangement from the majority of the Assam state on account of lack of road connection and inadequate water transportation, bank erosion trouble and frequent floods in addition to the big segments of tribal literacy. On account of most awful connectivity and regular floods, the region suffers from deficiency in terms of administrative and other developmental activities. The estimation indicates that the island has witnessed the loss of one third of its land in the last four decades. Besides the threat to this Vaishnavite cultural center owing to recurring land loss in recent past, Majuli is topographically represented by a physiographic elevation situated on the "high basement" (Lahiri & Sinha, 2014).

2.3 Tangible and Intangible Heritage of Majuli

Majuli is the land of unique religious culture of Vaishanavism and Vaishnavite institutions called *Satras*. The unique living heritage of Majuli has also been affected by the riverbank erosion. In Majuli originally there had been 65 *Satras* but now only 23 are surviving (Sarma and Phukan, 2004; Sarma, 2013). As a Vaisnavite site, the uniqueness of the Majuli represents an extraordinary

peculiarity in the global context. In the 16th Century A.D. simultaneously with the renaissance period, that transformed the look of the world. A similar rebirth in socio-cultural aspect took place in Assam, which was brought by the great Vaishnava Saint Sankaradeva. This was a concept of independent social principle, an amalgamation of various ethnic groups with common spiritualism. This established the basic foundation of a casteless social configuration in the Assamese culture. This has shaped a structure of social authority and community livelihood, which sustained over centuries and is an exclusive example of unity in diversity. The island is also enriched by the presence of vibrant culture of people belonging to the communities like *Mishings, Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Ahoms* and Nepali. The island is proud to have an array of ethnic tribes, who have hugely contributed towards its rich cultural heritage. The typical culture of the Majuli Island can be observed and analyzed based on the following perspectives:

i) Mask Making;
ii) Drama;
iii) Manuscript Writing
iv) Music
v) Dance
vi) Festivals
vii) Boat Making
viii) Fishing
ix) Pottery
x) Weaving

2.4 The **Vaishnavite Culture and the *Sattras***

Majuli, the first river island district of Assam in India that holds the top place of Neo-Vaishnavite movement has been pioneered by the great reformer Srimanta Sankardeva during the 15th Century. As per the statistics available with the Government of Assam, the island hosts around 65 Vaishnavite *Satras*. The severity of frequent river bank erosion is the sole reason of shifting of these *satras* to other places. However, at present out of 65, only 23 *satras* exist in the island.

Apart from dominated Mishing community, Majuli is also a residence of other ethnic communities namely, the Sonowal Kachari, Nepalis and Deoris etc. The Vaishnavite Institutions like *Satras* mainly preaches about a caste and classless society that seeks religious elevation of a person as an individual. There are few *Satras* called as 'Udasin' *Satra*, wherein the *Bhaktas* follows celibacy, but a few *Satras* have the *Satradhikar* (head of the *Satra*) and the *Bhaktas* have provision to get married and form a family.

Even though each and every *Satras* in the Majuli follow the fundamental ideology of Neo-Vaishnavite movement, but each of the *Satras* has a few unique individuality in terms of their cultural mandates. For example, when few *Satras* expertise in the art of mask making, some *Satras* get superiority in *Satriya Gayan* and *Bayan* i.e., the music and dance forms that are intrinsic parts of the Vaishnavite culture. On the other hand, a few Satras have mastery over the *Bhaona* i.e., the

theatrical acts and *Paalnam*, the typical innovative art forms visualized and applied by Srimanta Sankardeva to spread the philosophy of Neo-Vaishnavite culture.

The *Sattras* are mostly located in the mainland and some are in the Chapori areas that maintain a distinctive spiritual atmosphere. The *Sattras* are mainly situated at the centre of the Majuli Island. Each *Sattra* acts as centre for performance and cultural activities and also plays an important role to dissolve the local disputes as a self-governing organization. Almost all the villages are associated with their respective *Sattras*, and the inhabitants contribute in various activities of their own *Sattra* on the occasions of festivals and rituals. In the way, these *Sattra* Villages perform as important centers and own a *Narnghar* (council house), which is meant for carrying out all the activities pertaining to the *sattra*. For example, the juxtaposition of semi-urban places with *sattras* are depicted in the manner that places like *Kamalabari*, *Garmur* and *Dakhinpat* with *Garamur Sattra*, *Natun Kamalabari Sattra* and *Dakhinpat Sattra* are having the main commercial places of trade and commerce. These *sattra* villages and other settlements having people with different dialects belonging to various ethnic people have settled in Majuli Island. The people of diversified tribal origin have distinctive settlement patterns of their own and particular characteristics of buildings.

Mishing and Deori are the major tribal communities and they have the most typical pattern of their houses, which is built on the bamboo stilts and are located in the vicinity of the river, wetlands and other water bodies. The entire settlements are well placed in the exclusive natural setting, having wide diversity of land character and water bodies, which have resulted due to the singular interaction in between geomorphologic set up and hydrological characteristics of the island in conjunction with the river Brahmaputra. These different water bodies and groves perform as a home for various types of flora and fauna in the island. The proper knowledge of the natural ongoing experience by the local inhabitants is sufficient enough and is portrayed in the regional fact systems. The categorization of each natural component of the backdrop has evolved over a particular time frame.

2.5 Musical Heritage and Cultural Performance: The Living Heritage

In Majuli the religious, cultural and social life of the people is greatly influenced by the *Sattras*. The *Sattars* and the associated culture have made Majuli the principal seat of pilgrimage for their followers in Assam. The audiences throughout the world gets attracted by the *Sattras'* performances, particularly at the time of more than centuries old *Ras Leela* festival performed every year in the island (Kakati, 2010; Kothari, 2013). The masks are designed by hereditory craftsmen and are prepared from the organic materials like bamboo, jute, wood and cloth. The theatre culture of Majuli is not explored to that extent as yet.

The birth of brand *mukha bhaona* or mask theatre is performed as main part of the neo-Vaishnavite culture and is admired since sixteenth century. The *bhaona* is performed throughout Assam and are related to spiritual gatherings in *nam ghars*, meaning the chanting houses. Sagas from the customary *ankia naat* (one-act plays endorsed by the great reformer Sankardeva) are in general performed by all-male ensembles, while women have entered in the current year nto the stronghold

of this male domain. The monastery of *Natun Chamaguri Sattra* is a famous centre for manufacturing the masks and one of its most proficient exponents is the awardee Hem Chandra Goswami of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. The masks made by Shri Goswami can factually 'speak' during the performances, since the jaws are prepared in movable form with bamboo and can be made flexible by the actors by wearing them.

The mask-making culture aimed at divine performance or simply as cultural objects is gradually diminishing. Majuli is continuously under the threat of destruction. The previous research indicated that there is a threat that around 10-15 years Majuli may stop to exist... The *putala nach* or indigenous puppet theatre is directly related to the mask theatre. Again the performances are linked to the *ankia naat*. They use tiny puppets made of woods. Further, this form is kept alive because it is associated with the religious system of performers at the pilgrimage site of *Auniati Sattra*. Majuli's indigenous theatre is yet to be discovered by the mainstream section, which may be considered as a match in a well-built system of theatre performed in rural Assam. The network could hypothetically extend from Goalpara, where the theatre combined *Badungduppa Kalakendra* that is created by late Sukracharjya Rabha and is operating to Dhemaji. This is located close to the border between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, where Pankaj Chetia's Macbeth Drama is performed. These forms, definitely rural and are much more up to date in their viewpoint than the Vaishnavite string of theatres, which is the calling card of Majuli Island.

2.5.1 Dance Forms of Majuli

Sattriya dance accompanied by the music (*Sankriytana*) may be considered as one of the 8 classical dance forms of our country, which blends with the religion and aesthetic components and is represented through drama, dance and ballads. This is the living heritage of Majuli. The popular traditional dance form *Satraranga* (Fig.2) is performed by the group of Vaisnavite disciples and artists in the island. The performing artists have devoted their whole life for development of the sattriya art and culture. The saint Sankaradeva developed innovative dance forms to perform exclusively in the *Sattras* and is called Sattriya Nritya as complement to *Ankiya Naat* (an one-act form of Assamese play) in the Majuli island. The Sangeet Natak Academy has recognized the five centuries old *Sattriya* dance as a classical dance in the year 2000.

Fig. 2. Traditional *Sattriya* Dance of the Majuli Island



Source: https://www.esplanade.com/festivals-and-series/kalaa-utsavam-indian-festival-of-arts/2018

2.5.2 Festivals of Majuli

Being the Vaishnavite site of Assam, the Majuli Island is the centre of a variety of multi-coloured festivals. Some of the major festivals celebrated in the island, are *Janmashtami, Phalgutsav or Phakuwa, Ras Lila, Guru Tithi, Bihu*, etc (Nath, 2016). The birth anniversary of Lord Krishna is celebrated on the *Janmastami* i.e., on the 8th day of the dark moon in the Bengali month *Bhadra* on a date between mid August to mid September. The multi-coloured festival is celebrated in the full moon day of local month *Phagun* falling between mid of February to March. *Janmastami* is performed by the *gayan-bayan* and *nam-prasanga*. The *vaishnavite* performances like, *namkirtan, oja pali, gayan-bayan, bhaona* etc. form exclusive part of the *Raas Lila* celebration. The death anniversaries of the *gurus* like Saint Sankardeva, Madhavadeva and all the preceptors of the post Sankardeva times are performed during *Guru Tithi*. *Bihu* is the national festival of Assam, which is celebrated in Majuli with great grandeur.

The Mishing tribes follow agricultural cycle to celebrate other two important festivals namely, *Ali-aye-legang* and *Pohrak*. The commencement of the sowing season is celebrated on the first day of February month by the *Ali-aye-legang* festival. The five-day long *Ali-aye-legang* festival is celebrated through sowing of seeds in their respective fields and they pray for good harvest round the season and for the well-being of the family. The young men and women of every household celebrate the festival in their courtyard with song and dance accompanied by playing of traditional folk musical instruments. On the third day the families offer a feast for guests and in the subsequent fourth day no wrongful deed is performed. Wet rice boiled with cardamom and wrapped in leaves is offered to the guests during the feasts. In the early winter months, the post-harvest festival *Pohrak* is celebrated with music and dance. The three-day festival of the tribe is celebrated inviting a large number of people from adjoining villages.

2.6 Traditional Tribal Houses in Majuli

The Mishing tribes live in the traditional houses (Fig.3), which are generally made of wood with a thatched roof, bamboo flooring, ceiling and walls. The houses of Mishing tribes are built on top of concrete pillars. This is done to protect the house from flooding during peak monsoon season.

Fig.3. Traditional Tribal Houses in Majuli Island



Source: https://thirdeyetraveller.com/majuli-island-travel-guide-2018

3.0 THE SOCIETY AND COMMUNITIES IN MAJULI

As per 2011 census, the total tribal population is 77,603 that includes 39,328 and 38,275 are male and female respectively. Like many other islands in India, there is a heterogeneous society in Majuli, which boasts of a diversity of ethnic tribes resulting in its affluent and multi-colored heritage with unique cultural perspectives. The population of the island comprises of the communities like tribals, non-tribals, and scheduled castes. The society of the island is a combination of different creed and religions include Ahoms, Mataks, Chutiyas, Suts, Naths, Koibartas, Brahmins, Kalitas, Kochs, Sonowol Kacharis, Nepalis, Bengalis, Mishings, Deori, along with a few Marwaris and the Muslims. The major tribal population of Majuli includes the ethnic groups like *Sonowal Kacharis*, *Mishings* and *Deoris*, whereas the scheduled castes population includes the communities like the *Kaivartas*, the *Brittial Banias* etc. The following major groups are living in the Majuli Island:

3.1 Monks of the Sattras

Monks in the *Sattras* are belonging to the Assamese *Vaishnavite* monastic community. They practice *Eksarana Dharma* (Shelter-in-one God) that propagated since 16th century (Neogi, 1980).

3.2 Mishing

As per 2001 census, the Mishing people were 63,572, covering 42% of the total population in the island. They belong to the Tibeto-Burmese branch of the Mongoloids and are designated as the most significant tribal community of Majuli Island (Bordoloi, 1991; Pegu, 2014).

3.3 Deori

As per 2001 census, a total of 3498 (3%) of the island population belonged to the *Deori* i.e., the class of the *Chutiyas* originating from the Tibeto Burmese branch of the Mongoloids. The village economy, homes, farms, and marriage functions are similar to those of the Mishing tribe. With preservation of their own dialect and culture, the *Deori* groups of the island observe the Bihu along with own dance form the *Hurairangali*. The Deori groups are mainly residing in two villages namely, *Major Deori* and *Sriram Deori*, located at 7 km to the south-east of Jengraimukh (Assam State Gazetteer, 1999).

3.4 Sonowal Kacharis

Total 1,071 people of *Sonowal Kacharis* community are living in the island (2001 census) and most of them reside in the *Sonowal Kachari* villages located in upper part of the island. During the reign of *Chutiya* and *Ahom* kings, the community was engaged to collect gold from the heap of sands from the rivers like Subansiri and others of Assam state (Saikia, 2013). The Sonowol Kacharis group used to perform the dances like *Bohua, Haidang and Hagro*.

3.5 Mataks

The term Mataks fit in to the historic *Moamaria* community. In Assamese language, the word 'mat' means decision and 'ek' means one. In this way, the term 'Matak' derives as the unanimity in decision-making. During *Ahom* rule the *Moamaria* community wae termed as Mataks. Shri Shri Aniruddha Deva is their spiritual leader. The community are residing mainly in the Ashokguri, Dekasensawa and Burhasensowa villages of Majuli. The villages are situated on the north of Rawanapar. The Mataks are also popular for their exhibition of the musical instrument like Mridanga.

4.0 Livelihood

The rate of literacy among the Mishing tribes is approximately 68%. The occupations of most of the tribes are agriculture and weaving. The Mishing families grow a variety of crops like vegetables, tobacco, rice, bamboo and mustard. They also practice pisciculture of the endemic varieties of fish, sericulture, cattle farming, boat construction, handloom and handicrafts (Dutta, 2014). The tribal women gain knowledge of the art of weaving at a very tender age and weave cloth pieces out of muga or silk and cotton yarns. The Mishing tribes are popular for weaving of *Gadu*, a famous type of blanket. Preparation of the blankets demands special knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, the art is becoming extinct over the last few years. The Mishing women also contribute to the family earning by keeping pigs, cattle etc.

4.1 Tourism Aspects

There are a total of eight ghats in Majuli. Ghat means jetty. Nimati has the same meaning. The place were the steam boats launch. These are, (i) Kamalabari Nimati, (ii) Afala Nimati, (iii) Dakshinpath Nimati, (iv) Chalbhara Nimati, (v) Baguriguri Nimati, (vi) Phoolani Dikhamukh, (vii) Shikari Dikhamukh and (viii) Sumaimari Nimati, which perform ferry services for ferrying people from Majuli to Jorhat and back. Nimati Kamalabari is the biggest ghat. The tourists usually visit different *Satras* in Majuli, which are famous as centres of Vaishnavite culture.

The cultural heritage, together with rich biodiversity, unique ecosystem in Majuli have a significant tourism potential if the ethnic communities and traditional village institutions, like the *Dorbars* (Duncan, 2009), *Gaonburhas* (Sinha, 2007), etc. are empowered to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of the island. Majuli maintains a fine link with the remaining part of India through water transports and road overland. There are a good number of guest houses (Fig.4) and lodges owned by the government and private sectors. These house a great number of tourists who visit the island each year. The major attractions of Majuli include the *Sattras*, the sunrise, the sunset, and *beels* (water bodies) for bird watching. The main tourist attractions are as follows:

i) The wheels of the carriage that was brought from England in the eighteenth century and was used by the then *Sattridhakar* of *Garamur Sattra*.

ii) The Manuscript given by the Burmese to *Narasimha Sattra* subsequent to assassination of the then *Sattradhikar* by the Burmese army.

iii) Robe gifted by the *Satradhikar* of *Bengenaati Sattra* to the then King of Ahom. The gift is prepared on silk with the elaborate brocade design with threads of silver and gold.

iv) The set of miniature cannons and a gun that are made of wrought iron, which were gifted to the *Sattradhikar* of *Auniati Sattra* by the British.

Fig.4. Traditional Bamboo Cottage for the Tourists



Source: http://travelwithdare.blogspot.com/2018/08/majuli-island-assam.html

At present across the North-east states festivals of music contribute hugely towards the progress of tourism. The target is to showcase the region's exclusive diversity, to draw more attraction to the tourists and to spread the flavor of typical music of the river island. The recent statistics indicate that about 42,000 and 60 lakhs of foreign tourists and domestic tourists respectively visited the Assam state in the year 2019 and it is hoped that there will be increase in number. The island has better tourism growth rate compared to the national average. The cultural capital Majuli attracts of huge number of tourists, especially during autumn and winter. Tourists are exclusively attracted by the neo-Vaishnavism culture of the island. The previous research reveals that Srimanta Sankardeva, the social reformer, the founder of Neo-Vaishnavism movement in the medieval age has preached the Vaishnavism, which is the monotheist form of Hinduism, in the 16th Century. During his preach, Shri Sankardeva had established 65 monasteries and hermitages in Majuli, which are popularly known as the *Sattras*.

There are only 23 or 22 *Sattras* in functional condition in Majuli, of which the main existing ones include *Kamalabari, Benegenaati, Dakhinpat, Garamurh, Auniati, and Shamaguri.* These *Sattras* have conserved in their museums the antiquities, such as, ornaments, weapons, utensils, and other items having cultural significance. These treasures create a center of attention for the great number of tourists every year and fulfill the demand of livelihood to the island inhabitants. The island maintains adequate facilities of lodging for the tourists (Fig.6). However. The high endemic floods

coupled with continuous river bank erosion leading to depletion of landmass have compelled many of the established '*Sattras*' to relocate to places outside of Majuli for reasons of safety and economics. If this adverse situation cannot be checked it may finally bring the curtain down on the age old cultural richness of the region and would lead to a sharp decline in the arrival of tourists in Majuli.

4.2Government and NGOs contribution towards the goal of sustainable development

Majuli, the largest fresh water river island deserves an attraction of the government and non-government organizations (NGOs) for rural and socio-economic progress of its economically downtrodden people. The NGOs have an essential role to play in the economic development of the island people. The performance of the chosen NGOs is praiseworthy in this regard. Apart from contribution towards earnings, the NGOs are playing an important role in spreading literacy, bringing health consciousness and employment generation for the inhabitants of the island. Some NGOs significantly working for the development at Majuli include, River People, Shradha, Sadbhavana, IMPACT-N.E., Kalabhumi Majuli, REDS, and MIPADC etc.

The organizations provide the avenues for independent earning to the educated unemployed youths as well as try to safeguard the island from land loss to the mighty River Brahmaputra. The study reveals that three people friendly NGOs are facilitating people of the island with programs for development. These NGOs are entrusted with implementing diverse projects including income and employment generation,, health project, cultural, and educational projects. However, the field study indicates that out of 34 registered NGOs only a limited number of them are devoted for the welfare of the people and remaining are not functional in the island.

5.0 Protection of The Cultural Heritage and Promotion of Tourism

The study reveals that the following strategies would be beneficial for re-establishment of security against devastation caused by the River Brahmaputra, in the economy of Majuli and promote of its tourism potential:

(i) In order to curb the undesirable recurrent floods and change of the course of the river in the island, modern science and technology coupled with the traditional local knowledge and practices may be used effectively.

(ii) Sustainable special purpose vehicle programmes and specific policies need to be implemented for arresting losses due to flood, its intensity management and long term prevention of river bank erosion in convergence with the line departments and stake holders of the island.

(iii) Infrastructures at the presently operative ghats should be developed, so the that island people and vehicles may be transported without constrain..

(iv) Greater number of tourists may be attracted with the introduction of Star as well as budget hotels. At present there is less number of standard hotels available for tourists for night stay at Majuli.

(v) The char settlers are mostly dependent on cultivation. It is the mainstay of their livelihood. An urgent measure needs to be initiated at the Government and NGOs level to support them with an alternative occupation, such as, non-agricultural job for betterment of their livelihoods.

(vi) Sustainable Tourism by responsible tourists may help to achieve sustainable tourism in the study area by adopting following strategies:

- To include sustainable tourism alternatives with emphasis on the existing tribal culture.
- To sustain long term useful strategies in the prominent destinations of the island.
- To give due concern to the artefacts having importance of inheritance.
- To hold up the initiatives and tourism with participation of the local community.
- To admire the religious practices of local residents.
- To make use of the eco-friendly materials.

xi) Dumping of single use polythene bags and water bottles into the river is the huge environmental challenge in the island. Endeavour needs to be undertaken to inspire and work with the young people and with the local artists having regional cultural knowledge to explore substitute home-grown resources that could be used as replacement of harmful plastics.

xii) To conserve the multi-colored cultural heritage of Majuli island, the following steps are really noteworthy:

- To collect basic data followed by the listings of 23 major *Sattras* and its impact on the local people of the island.
- To build up a record of spiritual heritage and architectural characteristics as identified in the list of intangible heritage under threat.
- To develop an outline for codification of cultural resources (tangible and intangible) available in continuously from 16th century, followed by preparation of preliminary reports highlighting the profile on awareness about the threat to the Majuli community and to design the sustainable measures for alleviation of danger.

6.0 Conclusions

Majuli as a cultural heritage site is only one of its kind. It is noteworthy to comprehend the active and mutual interconnection between the island people, cultural diversities and environmental perspectives. The island showcases the deep insights into the perseverance of the cultural heritage created by Shri Srimant Shankardeva during the period of 1449-1568 CE on the basis of obvious principles of social equality as manifested in his philosophy through the dance forms like *Sattriya* and *Sankari*. As a gifted dramatist, Shankardeva created his own classical theatre, art and music,

which elevated him as the predecessor of Bhakti movement in our country over the years. In the lap of River Brahmaputra, Majuli has become the home of both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The huge tourist influx and earning of revenue of the island may be credited to tourism activities on river Brahmaputra. Hence, the River Brahmaputra is considered as the main support system of the island. However, in the last fifty years, the severe impact of anthropologenic interventions coupled with anti-natural activities has curbed the benevolence of the River Brahmaputra, which is utterly shocking and frightening for the sake of the foundation of socio-economic and geo-economic life of the inhabitants of the island. The Mishings and other marginalized communities are migrating from Majuli to the urban areas as land loss is occurring through the effect of river bank erosion. The severe land loss has wiped away around 2500 villages and 18 towns including the cultural heritage sites and tea gardens in Assam and is responsible for the adversity for about 5 lakhs of people of Majuli Island. In the last five decades, the river island has lost about 371 sq. km. land of its total land mass along with the distinguished Neo-Vaishnavite cultural heritage centres as a prey of River Brahmaputra. Majuli witnesses numerous touristic related activities, but there much more yet to be looked at and highlighted. Considering the benevolent role on the socio-economic life, all the stake holders of the island should come forward with the immediate, short-term as well as long-term sustainable protection measures that includes the environmental, economical, social and cultural perspectives and would be beneficial to safeguard the exclusive diversified cultural and living heritage of the Majuli Island.

End notes

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Preserving the Cultural Heritage in Terms of Traditional Religious Practices: A Study among the Tai Ahoms of Assam

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Abstract: Cultural heritages carry a unique identity for a particular community or a society to the outer world. Traditional religious beliefs and practices of a particular community as a part of their cultural heritage maintain the age old identity of that particular community. Religious practices may be observed in a patterned scriptural way or through oral traditions.In thelightof globalization many age old cultural heritages both tangible and intangible in nature going to be vanished from our world. Though in some society the members from elderly class and priestly classesare trying their best to preserve their traditional cultural values, but the modern younger generation is less bothered about their heritages. In this context the present paper focuses on the socio-religious practices of the Ahom people in a particular geographical setting of the state Assam in India. Religious beliefs, practices and values have great role to play in every society since the origin of the community living in the particular society. Through preserving their age old traditions a society or a community can manifest their unique identity to the greater world. The study revealed the consciousness and awareness of the people about their own tradition and customs. Observations and discussions are made on their present religious practices, their rituals related with marriage, birth and death and moreover how much they are concerned andworried about the preservation of their very own cultural heritages.

Keywords: *Cultural heritage, Religious practice, Preservation*

Introduction

Cultural Heritage can be manifested as the ways of living developed by a community and transmitted from one generation to next generation, including values, customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions, beliefs. Cultural heritage is the backbone of a society which affirms the identity of a nation to the outer world. Cultural Heritage mainly comprises either Intangible or Tangible Heritage (ICOMOS, 2002). Beside these natural heritage also exist which comprises the natural geographical landscapes, sacred forests, birds, animals and so on. The tangible heritage includes historical sites, buildings, monuments, and objects in museum, archives and any other legacy of physical artifacts. Intangible heritage includes traditions, customs, practices, folklores, crafts, skills, and knowledge inherited from one generation to the succeeding generation and passed on for the benefit of future generations. All these heritages enable us to form a unique identity and communicate its importance to the outer world.

Religious practices as a part of cultural heritage play a great role to maintain the unique cultural identity of a community or a nation in a greater extent. Cultural heritages like religious scripts, shrines, rituals, sermons, veneration, festivals, feasts, trances, music, art, dance etc. pass on the traditional religious practices generation after generation of a particular community. Religious practices are unanimously followed by the community members in a patterned way which is prescribed by religious institutions or sometimes orally transmitted to succeeding generations (George and Park 2013). Present study will focus on the traditional religious practices performed by the Tai Ahom people of Moranjan Gaonvillage situated in the state of Assam in North East India.

The North East Indian state Assam accommodates many ethnic groups of people in its lap with their diversified cultural heritages. This state became a cultural hub with various unique identities. Many people entered in its heart from distant corner and settled down here since time immemorial, they also were assimilated in the main stream of culture. Some of them lost their traditional identity and were absorbed fully in the main stream culture of the state. There are some group of people also who somehow follow their age old traditional cultural practices or sometimes a syncretic form of cultural identity grew up through the assimilation of various cultures. The Tai Ahom people entered in Assam through the Brahmaputra valley from the eastern side i.e., from the valley of the Irrawaddy River in 1228 A.D. They penetrated in this state under the leadership of the great Ahom king Chaolung Sue-Ka-Pha. These people originally belonged to the Tai race that scattered in a greater part of South East Asia and Southeast China. Under the leadership of Sue-Ka-Pha these people spread over a greater part Assam and by the first half of the sixteenth century, the Ahom kingdom flourished in size. After the conquest of Chutia and Kachari kingdoms the Ahoms became an unresisting power in the Brahmaputra valley (Buragohain1994).A group of Tai Ahom people came to Moranjan area and set up the Moranjan Gaonvillage in 1615 A.D. These people also were assimilated in the mainstream of state cultural flow (Barua1978).

In the present context the study aims to understand whether the Tai Ahom people of this Village totallyhave forgotten their traditional religious practices or are somehow maintaining their age old identity through traditional religious practices. This study also focuses on the rituals and festivals performed by the villagers at different phases of their lifecycle.

Methodology Applied

In every research a proper methodology should be followed in order to systematically solve the research problem. For conducting the present study the following methodology was followed by the researcher. This type of study necessitated data of extensively qualitative in nature. Apart from consulting the secondary data sources for the present study the data collection was done by using two techniques- i) *in-depth interviews* of some purposefully selected people related to this study; ii) collection of data using *schedules, questionnaires* to measure the religious status of the respondents.

Studied Village and its People

Moranjan Gaon village is situated in the district Charaideo of Assam in North Eastern part of India. Earlier it was in the district of Sibsagar, Assam. The village is situated within a latitude of 27.0674° North and longitude of 94.9117° East, with an area of 229.74 hectares. Sonari is the new District

Headquarter of the village. According to census 2011 the village code of Moranjan Gaon is 293203.The nearest important town from the village is Moranhat, approximately 18 kms far from the village, where the villagers used to go for marketing, medical treatment and higher studies. Nearest railway station is Moranhat railway station.

There are three hamlets in this village, namely; Uttar Moranjan, which is also known as Changmaichuk; Moranjan and Dakhin Moranjan, which is known as Deodhaichuk. Actually Chuk means residence. The Uttar Moranjan i.e., the northern part of the village is inhabited by the Clans Changmai and Bhuyans. The name Changmai Chuk came into existence from the clan names. The Dakshin Moranjan i.e., the southern part of the village is inhabited by the Mohans and Deodhai Clan's people from which the name Deodhai Chuk came into existence. The Middle part of the village which is known as Moranjan is in habited by the clans Mohan Deodhai, Phukan and Chetiaphaids.

As per the Census 2011 the village has 114 households with a total population of 557 out of which male population is 280 and female population is 277. As per this study the number of households and total population expectedly increased. At present the number of total household is 135 and the total population is 565 out of which male population is 278 and female population is 287. The village is homogenous in nature. All the population of Moranjan Gaon village belongs to the same community i.e., the Ahom community.

Findings and observations

In every society religion has a unique and important role which conveys an identity for the people of that particular society to the rest of World. Religion of Ahom people is not an exception, Their very own traditional religion also migrated with them and journeyed into the distant land at an early time The journeyed from southern part of China through Myanmar to North eastern part of India.On the way they met with various people of different religious believers and their religion amalgamated with others and at present it is difficult to find out the original religious form in some Ahom society. At present it becomes a syncretic form of religion which they follow. They practice some Hindu rituals to a greater extent with their own traditional beliefs. Therefore it is difficult to curve out the original form of their traditional practices from this syncretic one.

The Ahom people of this village though follow Hindu religion but at the same time they preserve their age old traditions connected with their religious beliefs and practices. The Ahoms are mainly ancestor worshipers. They worship their ancestor as saints. Traditionally the Ahoms had no particular gods or goddesses to worship. Any ancestor after death attained sainthood and are worshiped by the fellow community members. They believe that even after death the ancestors remain with them forever and look after their welfare. The supreme ancestor is known as PhaTuo Sing Frong Hung and he is considered as the supreme God of the community. The villagers individually worship their ancestors or sometimes worshiping is done at community level.

The Ahom believes in their own creation myth and they have particular world view. Their creation myth have a common link to creation myths of other Tai groups of Myanmar, northern Thailand, and Southern China and even with Chinese creation myths as a whole. Traditionally they follow their epic *Peng-ka-ka*, in which there is myth regarding creation of the Universe exists. It was written in Tai language. They believe that at the very beginning of time the whole Universe was a

ball of flesh, during the long time span it blasted and created the Solar system including the wind, water etc. in our planet earth. After that it gave rise to flora and fauna in the earth. For this reason their traditional worshiping is primarily divided into three categories, i.e., worshiping of the Universe, worshiping of the Solar system and lastly worshiping of the eternal phenomena like water, wind etc. They have special terms for these three categories namely; *Phratushingphrong hum, Ban Phi* and *Lang kuri (*Gogoi & Gogoi1994). They believe that they have a connection with the Dragons of China, they also believe that Dragons have wings and they can fly freely. For this reason some of them decorated their houses with the symbol of Dragons.



A villager is standing in front of a village house in which a symbol of a flying Dragon is seen

Traditionally the Ahoms are animist in nature and they sacrifice animals like pigs and fowls in every religious ceremony (Barua, 1978). In the wake of the new religious faith of *Shankara Deva's Neo Vaishnavism* some Ahom people became *Vaishnavite* and in course of time with the influence of *Vaisnavism*, the institution of 'Namghar' came into existence in the village (Barua, 1978). But now no one follows the Vaisnavism or any other religious beliefs except for their traditional one which is known as the *Phralung.* Among all the members of this village the *Mohans* and the *Deodhais* perform all the traditional rites and rituals (Sengupta and Charavarty, 1995). They have the right to conduct the rituals for the appeasement of the supernatural spirits. Earlier though they came into the fold of Hinduism but at present they have gone back to their traditional religious practices. The reason for such transformation may be due their sentiment for their traditional religious beliefs or they might have realized the importance of preserving their traditional cultural heritage.

The Ahom people conduct various rituals to safeguarding their family members or community members or for the welfare of their crops in a greater extent. Their socio-religious ceremonies may be divided under two broad categories – (1) Family level ceremonies- which are performed by the family members along with their kin members in a household or in own land, and (2) Community level ceremonies- in which rituals performed by all the community members of the Ahom group of people from different corners gathering together in one place. The timing for performing any ritual may vary. Some ceremonies are performed regularly after a certain period of time whereas some ceremonies took place after a long time gap.

Damak Diya is the main ceremony performed at individual level in every year to commemorate their ancestors and appease them with offerings. They believe that by performing this ritual their ancestors are propitiated, which will help them to prosper. As this ceremony is confined to the family members, the head of the family got the right to perform the ritual. They offer beetle-nut and leaves, rice-beer and different varieties of fruits which are available during that period of time to

their ancestors. They also offer fowl or pig to their ancestors. They perform it in a corner of their kitchen. Local priest come and chant hymns from their traditional scriptures.



An Ahom priest is performing a ritual related to ancestral worshiping in their



Offerings made to the deceased ancestors in a corner of the kitchen

Their ancestor worshiping can be divided into three categories, i.e., *Griha-dam* or *Dam-phi*, *Chang-Phi reign* and *chao-phi-dam (*Gogoi, & Gogoi, 1994). They worship their ancestors up to four generations within their house premises, particularly in the kitchen; they call it *Griha-dam* or *Dam-phi reign*. The worshiping of their ancestors from fifth generation to thirteen generation (i.e, nine generations in total), done outside the houses but within their own homeland and they call it *Chang-phi reign*. It is also done at individual level. The third category of worshiping is done at community level for their ancestors to fourteen generations up. This grand community worshiping of ancestors is known as *Me Dam Me Phi*. It is performed for commemoration of the dead ancestors fourteenth generations upward and of the supreme ancestors. *Me Dam Me Phi* is worshipped openly in the midst of nature. At present it becomes a socio-religious festival than to a ritual. The ceremony is done to an octagonal *Ho-Phi* constructed temporarily by bamboo sticks and thatches. In this ceremony the *Chao Phi dam* or the natural forefathers (supreme god) and *Dam Chao Phi* are worshipped. Animals like pigs, hens are sacrificed in this ritual.

It is quite interesting that the villagers do not follow any fixed timing for performing the religious ceremonies. Generally as per their convenience they perform most of the ceremonies. Most of the ceremonies performed during the month of October and April because in these months of the year they harvest their agricultural products and moreover the climatic condition also remains pleasant. One more important thing related with their traditional culture is *Laopani* , a locally made rice beer without which no ritual can be considered as successful. It has some medicinal value also. Ahom people take it after their hard work to re-energies their body. All the villagers prepare *laopani* at their home. During any kind of ritual some amount of *laopani* is offered to the ancestors and after which the other people can have it with a great pleasure.

Marriage, birth and death rituals are the other important socio-cultural phenomena which are unique and connected with the religious traditions of a particular community. This study also focused on the customs and practices related to the villager's marriage, birth and death ceremonies.

Marriage

The traditional marriage system of the Ahoms is known as *chak-long.* Only a few portions of the villagers are following *chak-long* which is performed by the priest with traditional rituals. Most of the villagers follow the marriage pattern of the greater Assamese culture. Mainly the Ahoms are an endogamous community i.e. they restrict their marriage within their own Ahom community but exogamous in the case of clans. Presently there are a few members who do not bother about all these restrictions; they marry outside their own community or within same clan. Among the Ahoms a girl from the King's clan cannot marry a boy from the Priestly clan but a boy from the King's clan can marry a girl from the Priestly clan. The tradition of maintaining a detailed genealogy (*Banshawali*) helped them to maintain their marriage restrictions.

While performing the traditional marriage system, *Chak-long*, they follow their age old customs and rituals related with this. After the settlement of marriage, the first thing they do is *Jurandiya* which is actually a ceremony where bridegroom party carries the bride's dress and ornaments and other objects used for grooming the bride. The main part of the ceremony starts after *Jurondiya.* A circle drawn on the ground, which is popularly known as *Mo-rol* with a beautiful design of lotus of seven different colors. Within the *Mo-rol* 101 earthen lamps are lit. At the same time three priests collectively perform the ritual. An extra person is engaged for lighting the lamps and arranging other objects for the ceremony. The all three priests recite the hymns from their traditional text while the ceremony is going on. Bride and bridegroom are seated in front of the *Mo-rol. Rik-khwan* is another important part of *Chak-lung.* It is also called as *Ayutula* or *Panitula* ceremony in which the female folk go to the tank, pond or river to bring out the *Khwan* or *Ayu* (Water). On the day of *chak-lung* a community feast is given by the bride's party.

Birth Ritual

Presently some changes related to birth have taken place due to the availability of medical facilities. Previously the delivery was done in the house only and a specially trained woman of the village looked after and helped to deliver a child. Bamboo sliver was used to cut the umbilical cord of the baby. At the moment of birth of a child, the family members beat drums to inform the villagers. The placenta is buried deep in their homeland preferably at the back side of the house where people do not usually go and walk on it... It is not disclosed to outsiders so that nobody can do any harm

through black magic or by any other means. The mother's movement is restricted within a room. A fire is lit near her bed for healing the womb soon and it also gave her strength (Sengupta and Charavarty,1995).

After the third day of birth, the mother is given a special meal with tender colocasia shoots (*kacchuthur*) cooked with black pepper powder. This ritual is known as *kacchujaalkhuwa*. A ritual is performed when the umbilical cord dried and dropped off the baby. This ritual is called as *Bajoliuwa*. The infant is taken out by the mother's mother and sacred water is sprinkled on the mother and child for their wellbeing. After 9 to 21 days of birth, a ceremony is performed which is called *Hudihuwa* it is performed for the purification of the mother and baby. After this ceremony the mother is free to go out and leads her life as usual.

Death Ritual

The Ahoms cremate the bodies of the dead. The villagers stick to their age old habit of burning the dead. In this village the observers of the traditional religious belief i.e., *Phralung* observed a ritual after the third day of death, which is known as *Tiloni*. In this particular day *Phralung* people take local rice beer (*laopani*) with a vegetable curry and salt and after that ritual the relatives can take salt and boiled food from the house of the dead. This is one type of purification ceremony observed by the *Phralung* people. On10th day of the death another ritual is observed by the villager, known as *chum phun ban phi* (ancestor worship). To commemorate the deceased ancestors they place three *Mehenga* (raised plater made of bamboo sticks) in their kitchen where they offer egg, betel nut, vine, rice, mustard oil, turmeric etc. They sacrifice a pig or hen and is offered to the deceased. They usually placed all the offerings in the north eastern corner of the kitchen. This ritual is called as *damotdiya* or *Dam phi*. On the 11th or 13th day they observed a ceremony which is called *kaj* in which they perform some traditional rituals and give a feast to the villagers.



After worshipping the ancestors, *laopani* is being served with vegetable curry and salt

Discussions

The present findings and observations suggest that some sections of the Ahom people residing in Moranjan Gaon village still adhere to their age old cultural heritages. Though some people previously converted into other sects of religion but with time they realized the importance and value of their own culture and retraced their very own tradition. Though the villagers from priestly classes and the elderly section are still trying to preserve some religious texts and oral traditions which are bearing their age old unique identity as a part of their cultural heritage but the younger

generation is ignoring these and are eager to assimilate the greater Assamese culture. In this regard more awareness and consciousness are needed to preserve their valuable cultural heritages.

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Fish Farming in Rice Paddy Environments: A Re-look at the Ingenious Agricultural Heritage of the Apatanis of Northeast India

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Abstract: The rice paddy is an agriculturally-managed wetland ecosystem with the potential to produce additional aquatic plants and animals as food, along with the staple rice. A wide range of traditional fish farming methods are practiced by indigenous communities in the ubiquitous rice paddy agroecosystems of Northeast India. The Apatanis of Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, are a small but unique indigenous people of the Eastern Himalayas. Their intangible cultural heritage represents the time-tested harmonious coexistence between society and their natural environment. These settled agriculturists practice fish culture in their rice paddy terraces in the form of running water terrace rice-fish farming system, the most advanced traditional rice-fish farming technique in this region. This perfect blend of wet rice agriculture and culture fishery, further linked with animal husbandry and social forestry, is an ingenious agricultural heritage system that is integral to their cultural landscape and cultural heritage. This indigenous hill farming system sustainably uses and manages local natural and human resources to achieve a better balance between agriculture and the associated biodiversity that underpins the functioning of this food production system. This agrobiodiversity and the intersecting facets of the intangible cultural heritage of the Apatanis, sustain this advanced rice-fish farming method with socioeconomic and ecological benefits. The significance of this model farming system with innovative strategies in the form of a wide array of traditional knowledge practices is that it caters to the global environmental agenda by supporting the livelihoods of the Apatanis, ensuring their food and nutritional security and protecting their environment.

Keywords: *Apatani, Arunachal Pradesh, fish farming, indigenous agriculture, rice paddy, Northeast India, traditional knowledge practices.*

Introduction

Half of the global population depends on rice as a staple food—including almost all of East, Southeast and South Asia. However, the rice monoculture as a food production system lacks long-term sustainability (Ahmed and Garnett 2011: 84). Rizipisciculture, or integrated rice-fish farming, is the amalgamation of agriculture and pisciculture (or aquaculture). Harvesting fish—both finfish and shellfish—as an additional crop from the rice field is traditionally practiced across the cultural landscapes of Asia (Schuster 1955: 67). This, in the strict sense, involves farming rice and fish concurrently in the same field, and at the same time (Halwart and Gupta 2004: 1). Ecologically, the rice paddy is an agriculturally-managed wetland ecosystem that remains dry during at least a part of

the year. In Asia, the diversity of indigenous fish harvesting practices in rice paddy environments is probably as old as the wet rice cultivation itself (Hora 1951: 171). The water-logged rice field is a natural habitat for wild fish. Therefore, this farming practice probably started as capture fishery. Presumably, as rice cultivation progressed from shifting cultivation in rainforest clearings to sedentary farming in irrigated paddy fields, the aquatic fauna from neighbouring wetlands arriving with flood waters could easily thrive in the stagnant water within the embankments during the wet rice farming cycle. Later, the intentional stocking of selected fish in paddy fields, or culture fishery, evolved possibly due to increased demand for fish production. The rice paddy environment in its flooded state, with varying water depth depending on factors such as land topography and rainfall pattern, is a valuable agroecological system that can potentially producing additional crops of aquatic plants and animals as food for human consumption, in addition to rice—the main staple food in this part of the globe. The traditional cultivation of rice as the primary crop, supplemented with fish as a secondary crop, is economically viable (Rahman *et al*. 2012: 121) and ecologically sound (Noorhosseini-Niyaki and Bagherzadeh-Lakani 2013: 5). This also allows the optimal use of the increasingly limited natural resources such as land and water (Frei and Becker 2005: 140). Interestingly, the integrated rice-fish farming is an ideal food production system for marginalized tribal and rural communities in developing societies by producing rice—a source of plant carbohydrate—and fish—a source of animal protein—in a single agricultural plot, to achieve nutritional balance in their diet at the source itself. This review paper presents a brief overview of the traditional rice-fish farming methods practiced in Northeast India, and then focusing on the rizipisciculture of Apatanis of Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh. The role of the traditional knowledge practices of the Apatanis associated with this indigenous hill farming system in the sustainable use and management of local resources, and their socioeconomic and ecological impacts were explored.

Methodology

The source of information presented here is a review of secondary sources as well as inputs from field trips to the Ziro Valley, Lower Subansri District, Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to the literature cited, general observations and personal interactions (collected with the help of local guides-interpreters) at three villages: Hong (27°33’ N, 93°50’ E), Hari (27°33’ N, 93°50’ E) and Hija (27°33’ N, 93°49’ E) were recorded and analyzed. These field studies were done during May (pre-monsoon) and October (post-monsoon), 2014, 2015 and 2017. The district museum and craft centre was also visited.

Diversity of Rizipisciculture Practices of Northeast India

Geographically, Northeast India comprising of eight states, namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim and Tripura, lies between 21°34' N to 29° 50' N latitude and 87° 32' E to 97° 52' E longitude. This unique geographical region of India has not only an amazing diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups (Irshad-Ali and Das 2003: 145), but also has an enormous range of ecological habitats and life forms (Mao *et al*. 2009: 97). This region is also part of two biodiversity hotspots: the Himalayas and the Indo-Burma region.

Rice is the staple food in Northeast India. The agro ecology of the paddy fields in this region is extremely diverse in the form of upland or lowland, shallow water or deepwater, rain-fed or irrigated rice agro ecological systems (Das 2002: 43). Here, diverse methods of concurrent rice-fish farming are practised. The more primitive techniques are dependent on the naturally-occurring wild fish resources. But in the more advanced methods, indigenous or introduced carps are selectively stocked in the inundated rice fields. Earlier, Hora (1951: 171), described four indigenous methods of fish harvesting in the rice paddies of Asia: (a) catch on irrigated rice fields, (b) fish rearing as a secondary crop, (c) fish culture between harvest and planting and (d) mixed rice cultivation and fish culture, reported from Java and Kerala, but with no reference to Northeast India. Later, Das (2002: 43) categorized the traditional rice-fish farming practices prevailing in Northeast India as follows: (a) rice field capture fishery system, (b) wild aquatic cropping system, (c) mountain valley rice-fish farming system, and (d) running water terrace rice-fish farming system. The diversity of the little-known integrated rice-fish farming heritage of India's northeast (Table 1) is presented briefly to contextualize the study of the ingenuity of rizipisciculture of the Apatanis.

Rice Field Capture Fishery System:

This is the most primitive method, strictly in the form of capture fishery. The rice paddies are strategically located near wetlands, lakes and rivers in the flood plains of Assam. During the monsoon deluged these turn into an immense, continuous water body that is virtually unmanageable. Wild aquatic fauna freely enter these fields along with floodwaters, thriving alongside the rice crop. The wild fish, confined to these rain-fed, deep-water, lowland rice ecosystems, is captured over an extended period from the initial inundation of the fields by the floods (in June) to the recession of the flood waters (in November). The fish is captured by gill nets, cast nets and other indigenous devices either in rice-free patches in the fields or at their water entry-exit points. The reported average yield is 45-280 kg/hectare/year (Das 2002: 44). Along with diverse indigenous fishes, snails, crabs and aquatic vegetables like *Ipomea*, *Alternathera*, *Nymphaea*, etc. are also harvested.

Wild Aquatic Cropping System:

This is a relatively less primitive rice-fish culture method, largely in the form of capture fishery. The rice fields are situated in the foothills of all the states, surrounded by embankments to retain rainwater flowing from irrigation canals and natural watercourses with which they are well-connected. Waterlogged during the monsoons, these habitats are used to deliberately lure, trap and rear the wild aquatic fauna. Trap pits are frequently dug in each rice plot to facilitate the entry of fish into the field and to give them refuge. Often jute retting tanks are used as trap ponds. Tall local cultivars of rice such as *sali*, *bao*, *aman*, etc. are traditionally grown in these seasonal wetlands with water depth as much as 2.5 m. In addition to the direct capture of wild fish over an extensive period as described above after their entry into these irrigated, deep-water, lowland rice ecosystems, gravid females and young fingerlings are also trapped to intentionally stocked the fish and allow them to grow for 3-4 months (from June to October). When the flood waters recede, the fish moves into the trap pits and natural ditches in the plots, where they are harvested. The average yield usually ranges between 200-300 kg/hectare/year (Das 2002: 44).

Mountain Valley Rice-Fish Farming System:

This is a relatively more advanced method, mostly in the form of culture fishery. The rice fields are firmly positioned in the terraced mountain valleys of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, surrounded by dykes to retain water flowing down the mountain streams through a system of irrigation canals. During the monsoons these flooded fields are deliberately stock with both indigenous and introduced fish species. Entry of wild fish from the neighbouring water bodies to colonize the flooded rice paddy is also allowed. The stocked fingerlings grow in the flooded field and their connecting canals, facilitated by a specially dug refuge pit in each rice plot. The canals are blocked with bamboo screens to prevent fish escape, while allowing the entry of wild fish from canals and streams. Dwarf cultivars of rice are grown in these irrigated, shallow-water, highland rice environments. After few months of growth, the fish is harvested at the end of the rice season, either in the canals or refuge pits. The average yield is about 200 kg/hectare/year (Das 2002: 45). Usually, the introduced common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) and selected indigenous fish such as *Labeo rohita*, *Catla catla*, *Cirrhinus mrigala*, *Channa* spp. *Puntius* spp. are stocked.

Running Water Terrace Rice-Fish Farming System:

This is the most advanced method, solely in the form of culture fishery. The rice fields are precariously perched on the terraced mountain slopes of Meghalaya, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, surrounded by high dykes and well-connected through an extensive system of rain-fed canals to establish an intricate water flow system from the higher terraces to the lower ones. During the monsoons these rice paddies are exclusively stocked with the introduced common carp at a high density of up to 6,000 fingerlings/ hectare. The stocked fish grows in the flooded fields on the terraces with a refuge trench in each rice plot. Dwarf cultivars of rice are generally grown in these rain-fed, shallow-water, highland rice environments. The opening of the canals is blocked with bamboo screens to prevent fish escape from the rice fields. After the few months of growth the fish is harvested during the weeding cycles or finally at end of rice season, from the refuges pits where the fish retreats as the water in the field is intentionally drained out. The average fish yield could be as high as 500 kg/hectare/year (Saikia and Das 2008: 126).

The Apatanis and their Cultural Landscape

The Ziro Valley (1,524—2,738 m), in the Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh (22° 34' N, 88° 24' E), is considered as the 'rice bowl' of the Eastern Himalayas. This small (1,058 km^2) remote area is home to the Apatani people, a distinct hill tribe of the Tani group of central Arunachal Pradesh. However, their language, beliefs and practices are distinct from all the other Tani tribes (Goswami and Das 1990: 166). They belong to the Mongoloid stock, speak a Tibeto-Burmese language, and practice the animistic Donyi-Polo religion. Their traditional ecological knowledge has evolved since the colonization and transformation of this desolate valley in the thirteenth century (Blackburn 2004: 26). Their oral tradition (*miji-migung*) has stories to store, use and transmit this knowledge (Blackburn 2008: 16).

The indigenous hill communities of Northeast India practice rice-based subsistence farming that ranges from shifting to sedentary agriculture (Majumder *et al*. 2011: 297). Rich genetic resources of the Asian rice (*Oryza sativa*) are available in this region on account of its climatic and ethnic

diversity (Hore 2005: 1130). Diverse indigenous methods of rice-fish farming in this region have already been described. In this context, the cultural landscape of the Apatanis of Ziro Valley is a jewel among jewels. They have transformed and preserved their natural environment with their advanced sedentary agriculture, in contrast with the primitive slash-and-burn (*jhum*) farming of their neighbours. As settled agriculturists, the Apatanis have perfected the rain-fed, shallow-water cultivation of upland rice. Their complex and productive agroecosystems consist of terraced rice paddies (33 km^2) buffered by forest tracts (288 km^2). Their vast mosaic of terrace farms, spread up to the forest edges, have an intricate system of water channels connected with the river Kale, and are integrated with nearby houses (*ude*), granaries (*nesu*), burial grounds (*simaliko*), gardens (*ballu-yollu*), ponds (*ngyi super*), pens (*alyigiiri*), pastures (*polang*) and plantations (*naarun*). These are all community-managed. Their system of communal labour involves both men and women. All agricultural activities involve specialized farmer groups. Working with indigenous farm implements, human labour is the major input. Animal labour is complete absent. This results in high energy output and energy efficiency as documented before (Rai 2005: 69). The local village council (*buliang*) of male elders administers the management of natural and human resources. The biodiversity-rich natural vegetation adjoining the farms are well conserved (Rechlin and Varuni 2006: 22). This protection of the local biodiversity is though informal institutions such as social taboos and customary laws (Barooah 2007: 125). Like other indigenous communities in this underdeveloped region, the Apatanis as traditional agriculturists have entrenched cultural beliefs and practices (Chaudhuri 2008: 4). There is a fixed agricultural calendar, which is linked with agrarian rituals and festivals (Table 2). The traditional knowledge practices of the Apatanis described below in details are bio cultural innovations in these agro ecosystems where nature and culture are inexorably linked in a complex and dynamic union, as an integral part of this unique cultural landscape in this remote corner of the Eastern Himalayas.

Ingenuity of Rizipisciculture Practices of the Apatanis

The Apatanis of Ziro Valley traditionally practice the wet-rice farming in the form of an advanced indigenous hill farming system called *jaebe-aji*—the running water terrace rice-fish farming system, one of the most efficient and productive method of integrated rice-fish cultivation in Northeast India (Das 2002: 43). This ingenious agricultural strategy is an example of the indigenous agricultural approach of biodiverse farming with multiple species, and even cultivars, for the sustainable production of diverse food products. This integrates the cultivation of the major cereal rice (*pyapin*) with the farming of the common carp (*ajingiyi*) in the terrace plots (*aji*), along with the minor cereal finger millet (*sarse*) (*Eleusine coracana*) grown on the earthen bunds or dykes (*agher*) separating them. This remarkable agroecosystem has produced diverse dwarf landraces of japonica rice (*O. sativa* var. *japonica*) with unique agronomic features (Dollo *et al*. 2009: 48), as well as those of millets (Dollo *et al*. 2009: 49). Millets and maize are also separately cultivated in the uphill, drier plots (*yapyo*). This is in turn supplemented with their animal husbandry (Hazarika *et al*. 2010: 688) and social forestry (Rechlin and Varuni 2006: 23) as well.

Preparing the Rice Paddy Environments

The agricultural activities of the Apatanis start in mid-winter. In January, the fertility rites of the Murung festival herald the commencement of the agricultural calendar. Like the rest of Northeast India, this hill farming system is practised in arrays of terrace farms cut out of mountain slopes. Their skilful management of this limited land resource is vital to the running of this rice-fish farming. Each terrace plot is small (250 to 3,000 m^2) and has a small (25-35 cm deep) pit or refuge trench (*siikho*) for the fish at its centre. These plots are separated by earthen bunds that are strong (about 1.5 m in breadth and 0.5 m in height) and fortified with bamboo, cane or timber. The finger millet grown on them as a soil binder adds to this strength. A wooden shovel or crowbar called *sampeyee* is used to level the plots, raise the bunds and dig the pits. The perfect levelling of the plots and the presence of the bunds are designed to reduce soil erosion and check the loss of soil fertility. These bunds are repaired in January before the Murung festival. The *aji-lenda*, a traditional farmer group led by a male or female (*lenda-kagenee*) maintains this extensive network of dykes. The penalty for any damage to these bunds is to personally repair the damage, and bear its cost along with the fine of an adult cattle. The perimeters of these terraces are fenced with local materials to keep away marauding wildlife. Strategically, the early-maturing, low-yielding rice cultivars such as *mipya* (harvested in July), are farmed in the far-flung plots near forest margins with incidence of crop raiding by wild animals, poor soil nutrients and erratic water supply. The late-maturing, high-yielding rice cultivars such as *amo* (harvested in October), are grown in plots near the village limits. The fences are also repaired in January before the Murung festival. The *sulu-sikhii*, another farmer group supervised by a male (*sulu-kagenee*) looks after this elaborate farmyard fencing. The penalty for any damage to this fencing is to pay twice the cost of repair and the fine of an adult cattle and a traditional sword (*chirrisoye*). As in the rest of Northeast India, this hill farming system is entirely rain-fed and dependent on the monsoon. Their efficient management of the seasonally available rainwater is critical to the success of this rice-fish farming. The terrace plots are classified as *jebi*, *aane* and *ditor* based on their increasing aridity. These hill terraces are fed by an intricate system of efficient rainwater harvesting. The subtropical and temperate forests of the surrounding hills are critical in maintaining this water supply. The water of each rain-fed stream in these forest tracts is channelized into a complex succession of main canals that are meticulously planned along the edges of the valley. This water flow under the influence of gravity gets diverted through a vast network of carefully engineered primary, secondary and tertiary branch canals (*siikho*) to feed this entire succession of hill terraces. The *sampeyee* is used to dig the canals as well. During the monsoon, each terrace plot receives continuously water flow from an earthen feeder channel (*sugang*), branching off through a bamboo or wooden pipe (*hubur*). The excess water in each plot continuously flows out from to the next lower terraces through a ditch (*muhgo*) with two pipes. By simply blocking or reopening these connecting pipes each plot can be drained or flooded to a desired depth. Intentionally, pegs and pebbles are placed as energy dissipaters, and the tall reed (*pepu*) (*Phragmites karka*) is grown as a soil binder on the bed of these conduits to check soil erosion, leaching and nutrient wash off. The excess water flows through the main canals into the river Kale without much loss of organic nutrients. These canals are also repaired in January before the Murung festival. The *bogo*, another farmer group administered by a *bogo-ahtoh* (male),

maintains this intricate irrigation system. The penalty for any damage to these canals is the same as that for the bunds. The Apatanis have privately-owned plantations in the form of intensely managed bamboo groves (*bije*) located inside the villages with monocultures of runner bamboo (*tanii bije*) (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*) or tufted bamboo (*yayii*) (*Dendrocalamus hamiltonii*), and moderately managed pine groves (*sansung*) located outside the villages with the predominant blue pine (*piisa sanii*) (*Pinus wallichiana*). Their clan-owned adjoining natural forests (*moorey*) are the least managed. These habitats provide construction materials for maintaining and repairing of bunds, fencing and canals, as well as for making indigenous farm implements. The farmer group called *bije-lenda*, supervised by a male *lenda-kagenee* keeps these plantations accessible by clearing their footpaths amidst the dense undergrowth. The penalty for any damage to the plantations is to pay the cost of repair along with the fine of an adult female cattle and a calf. In February, rice seeds are sown (*andhi-lilo*) in special plots (*miding*) with rice nurseries. *Huta* a wooden trowel is used to prepare the nursery beds. Headed by a *patang-ahtoh* (female), the farmer group called *tanser-patang* prepares the beds and sows rice seeds. This farming is integrated with animal husbandry, social forestry and even their homesteads to recycle organic wastes. During the fallow season, after the panicle harvesting of rice, the plots with most of the crop biomass are used as grazing pastures. These crop residues and the cattle dung are naturally recycled to enrich the soil. Likewise, women dump organic waste from households such as kitchen waste, rice chaff (*piina*), firewood ash (*mubu*), pig excreta (*alyiekha*), poultry droppings (*paropai*) and cow dung (*siiekha*) into the fallow fields for recycling and replenishing the soil humus. Even leaf litter (*ankho*) from *moorey* forests is added to the rice fields. In March, the land is prepared for cultivation. The remaining stubbles are bunt to return nutrients to the soil. Decomposed straw (*liisi*) and burnt straw (*muyu*) are also mixed with the soil. The plots are finally levelled with the *sampeyee*. Again, headed by a *patang-ahtoh* (female), the farmer group called *konchi-patang* prepares the fields. In nearby fish ponds (*ngyi-super*) the fingerlings are raised. This coincides with the kinship festival of Myoko. The *myokung* ritual is done for restoring soil fertility. The *kide* ritual protects the crop from pests and diseases.

Fish Farming in the Rice Paddy Environments

The pre-monsoon showers usher in the main farming season for the Apatanis. The *tamu* ritual is performed now or later for protecting the crop from sudden pest attacks. In April, the rice seedlings are transplanted (*andhi ali*). This involves a seed planting technique called dibbling, widely practiced in the hill terraces where ploughing and harrowing are difficult. During the transplantation, a water level of 1-2 cm is maintained in the plots. The seedlings are put in holes (5 cm apart) made in the plots with a pointed wood or bamboo stick called *kdu*. The millet seeds are directly planted on the bunds by dibbling holes with a similar *dum*. In the higher slopes, the millet and maize seeds are likewise planted in the dry plots with the *kdu*. Yet again, headed by a *patang-ahtoh* (female), the farmer group called *halying-patang* transplants the rice seedlings and plants the minor crops. After the transplantation, fingerlings are released into the pits of the waterlogged plots, up to 5,000 fingerlings/ha (Dollo *et al*. 2009: 50). As the rice and fish grow, this water level is gradually increased up to 15 cm depending on the height of the rice cultivar and the size of the stocked fish, to ensure continued inundation of the rice fields especially for late ripening varieties. During the monsoons, the fish comes out of the trench and moves into the submerged paddy fields.

All the water outlets are blocked with bamboo screens to prevent fish escape. In July, in terraces with late-maturing varieties, fingerlings are again released after the harvest of the early batch of fish. The two crops—rice and fish—support each other through a complex interflow of matter and energy within the rice paddy environment. On one hand, the carp, an opportunistic omnivore, feeds on the detritus, phytoplanktons, periphytons, roots, buds, stem, leaves and even seeds of submerged rice field weeds, submerged leaves of the rice crop, zooplanktons, and benthic arthropods and molluscs. No fish feed is required. The carp gets enough nutrition without the farmers incurring any additional expenses. On the other hand, the bottom feeding activities of the carp also loosens the soil, increases soil aeration and enhances microbial activity to allow better recycling and availability of soil nutrients to the rice crop. The fish adds its excreta to the soil which get recycled to increase its fertility. The feeding activities of the carp create microclimatic conditions in the paddy field that are unfavourable for weeds, pests and pathogens. Their feeding behaviour uproots weeds, consumes their propagules and turns the water too turbid for their growth. They also eat the submerged plant parts of aquatic and semi-aquatic weeds that are potential hosts of rice pests, submerged plant parts of the rice crop that in diseased state are likely sources of fungal pathogens, and insects and snails including their larvae that are probable rice pests. The fish also strips off leaves at the base of the rice crop to improve air and light conditions that do not favour fungal intensifications. No agrochemicals such as fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide or fungicide are needed. The rice crop gets enough nutrients and support without any extra expenditure by the farmer. However, like any other wet rice farming system these wetland environments suffers from nutrient washout. The Apatanis additionally manage soil fertility by organic means only. The paddy fields receive natural nutrient washout from the nearby hills. The houses and granaries on higher grounds supply decomposed waste that is drained down to the rice fields. *Azolla* floating in the plots function as nitrogen fixing biofertilizer. These nutrient-rich environments are also infested with competitor plants, and antagonistic microbes and animals. The biodiversity of this agroecosystem plays a key role in the biological control of weeds, pests and pathogens. Many of the local rice cultivars are resistant to pathogens and pests (Dollo *et al*. 2009: 48). The rice ear-head bug (*Leptocorisa oratorius*) is ingenuously managed by the Apatanis by fixing short wooden or bamboo sticks in the paddy fields with impaled animals trapped from the paddy field itself to distract the adult bugs away from the rice crop (Singh and Bag 2002: 235). The finger millet growing on the bunds suppresses weeds. However, the plots require weeding (*tami-hodu*) in two or three cycles. For early-maturing varieties this is done in May during tillering and then in June during flowering. For late-maturing varieties this is done in May and June during tillering and then in August or September during flowering. During weeding cycles, the water in the field is completely drained out. The fish retreats into the trenches. This avoids extreme turbidity of the water by stirring up the soil which can harm the fish. *Kele*, a long-handled bamboo hoe with a metal apex is used for weeding the rice fields. *Pale*, a short-handled hoe is similarly used for the nearly kitchen gardens (*ballu*) and vegetable gardens (*yollu*). The extracted weed (*tamih*) is dumped in a corner of the rice field for recycling and replenishing the soil humus. The farmer group involved in preparing the rice fields also carries out the weeding. The penalty for trespassing the rice paddy (or its supporting human-modified and natural habitats such as gardens, plantations and adjacent forests) is to pay

twice the cost any damage and the fine of an adult cattle. In July, during the main agricultural festival called Dree, the *sodu* ritual is performed for ensuring seasonal rainfall and a bumper harvest from the fields and plantations. In September, the *yapung* ritual is performed to protect the nearly mature crop from the danger of torrential rains and hailstorms.

Fish Harvesting in the Rice Paddy Environments

The farming season of the Apatanis reaches its climax in October as the time of harvesting (*antee dandu*). The rice (97%) and finger millet (3%) are harvested together. In terraces with early-maturing varieties, only one fish harvest is possible, but in those with late-maturing varieties there is enough time for two or three harvests. In most terraces, harbouring late-maturing varieties, the rice, millet and last batch of fish are harvested in October. However, in fewer terraces, with early-maturing varieties, this takes place earlier in July. In terraces with late-maturing varieties, the first batch of fish is also harvested at this time. Sometimes, another batch of fish is harvested between these two seasons. The millets and maize in the drier plots of the upper slopes are also harvested in October. After the crop matures, the paddy field is finally drained off and kept dry till the next transplantation. The fish retreats into trench where they are captured after 2-3 months of growth reaching 40-50 cm length and 1.0-1.2 kg weight (Dollo *et al*. 2009: 51). A small metal sickle called *taggi* is used to harvest the cereal panicles. After threshing on a wooden board, winnowing is done with a large bamboo tray called *yapyo*. The farmer group called *enthee-patang* headed a *patang-ahtoh* (predominantly a female) is involved in threshing and winnowing the harvested crop and then transferring the grains to the granaries. After the harvest, there are few activities for the rest of the year. In November, the fences are repaired before winter. The paddy fields are left fallow and used for livestock grazing during winter. The fish capture employs indigenous bamboo devices. Predominantly, the fish is caught from the refuge trench using a conical net called *tajer*. At times, the fish is also harvested in the plot with a bag-like net called *barju*. Rarely, they are ensnared in the plot with a tray-like trap called *nyiyepakhe* or at the water outlet with a funnel-like trap called *takhung*. The harvested fish is cleaned and transported to the local market in finely-woven, conical bamboo or cane basket called *ajii-piiwa*. Different varieties of the common carp such as mirror carp (*Cyprinus carpio specularis*), scale carp (*C. carpio communis*), leather carp (*C. carpio nudus*) are cultivated (Tayo *et al*. 2016: 67). These represent 80% of the fish harvest. The rest are other introduced fishes such as grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*), silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*), etc. which adds to the diversity, but are less productive (Dollo *et al*. 2009: 50). The rice production is up to 10 tonnes/ha/season (Baruah et al. 2019: 30). The fish productivity is 400-500 kg/ha/season (Rai 2005: 69). A major part the rice harvest is consumed as a staple in preparing food as grain (*empi*) and powder (*yatang*), and beverage as beer (*o*), as well as used in rituals. Still, as much as 40% of this staple is bartered with the neighbouring Nishis and Hill Miris. (Rai 2005: 69). The millet and maize are also used as food and beverage. However, most of the fish harvest is sold in the local markets with good returns (Reena and Nani 2014: 3; Baruah and Singh 2018: 189). In general, the biodiversity underling this food production system is also protected in the adjoining refuges for biodiversity. The river Kale harbours wild fish such as *tali-ngiyi* (*Channa* spp.), *papi-ngiyi* (*Puntius* spp.), *ngilyang-ngiyi* (*Schizothorax* spp.), *tabu-ngiyi* (*Macrognathus* spp.), *ribu* (*Nemaucheilus* spp.), *ngiyi-papi* (*Rasbora* spp.) (Nimachow *et al*. 2010: 27). The village-owned

natural vegetation functioning as biodiversity buffers includes the unmanaged remote forest tracts (*myodi*), as well as isolated patches of virgin forests near the villages in the form of sacred groves of blue pine (*ranthii*) or banyan (*saro-san*), two ecologically-sensitive tree species. The penalty for any unauthorized bioresource extraction from the forests is a fine that ranges from a chicken to adult cattle. The penalty for breaking any taboo of the sacred groves is the fine of an adult female cattle.

Conclusion

Global food security is a serious challenge faced by humanity on account of multiple factors such as the growing world population (Godfray *et al*. 2010: 812), limitation of agricultural resources (MacDonald 2010: 21259) and negative effects of climate change on agricultural productivity (Brown and Funk 2008: 581). The challenge before world agriculture today is to sufficiently increase food productivity while minimizing the detrimental environmental effects of modern agricultural expansion (Tilman *et al*. 2011: 20262). The rhizipisciculture of the Apatanis of Ziro Valley is a perfect blend of wet rice agriculture and culture fishery, linked with animal husbandry and social forestry. This is an ingenious agricultural heritage system encompassing diverse and complex agroecosystems maintained by this indigenous society, that are managed as an integral part of their cultural landscape, and conserved as an vital component of their cultural heritage. This traditional hill farming system of Northeast India had sustainably used limited natural resource such as land, water, nutrients and forests, effectively managed common agronomic problems such as weeds, pests and diseases, and efficiently organized abundant human resources as specialized farmer groups, to successfully adapt themselves to this challenging terrain. The Apatanis have made four key modifications in the traditional rice paddy terraces of in the Eastern Himalayas to make them more suitable for farming the introduced common carp: increased bund height, and provisions for drainage, fish refuges and fish screens. A better balance between agriculture and biodiversity benefits both (Erisman *et al*. 2016: 158). The crucial ecological services provided by the crop diversity present in these human-made habitats along with the surrounding natural habitats as refuges for the wider biodiversity underpins the functioning of this food production systems. This agrobiodiversity, intersecting with diverse aspects of their intangible cultural heritage including social practices, traditional knowledge and skills, has sustained this advanced rice-fish farming with socioeconomic and ecological benefits. These agroecosystems are still free of the multifarious threats faced by global agriculture with changes associated with the intensification of its productivity. This includes increasing dependence of farm mechanization, elite cultivars and agrochemical such as fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and fungicides, that can degrade ecosystems, damage biodiversity, and harm the health of agricultural workers and consumers alike. The significance of this model rice-fish farming system is that it caters to the global environmental agenda by adopting diversified land usage patterns, ingenious techniques for irrigation, organic waste recycling, and biological control of weeds, pests and diseases, preference for local materials, and entrenched knowledge practices, social customs and cultural beliefs, to grow local cultivars of rice and millets along with the exotic carp, but with minimum inputs due to complex interactions between its diverse components resulting in the absence of farm machinery, modern hybrids and synthetic chemicals. In this inimitable rice-fish farming system, nature and culture are inexorably

connected in a complex and dynamic relationship that sustains the viability of their livelihoods, the resilience of this food production system and the richness of the biodiversity underlying it. This study contributes to the global mission of food security by highlighting a local solution from the rice terraces of the Ziro Valley. The traditional knowledge-based innovative practices of a sedentary farming system of the Apatanis can be explored elsewhere as a model system for the long-term sustainability of food production that is economically, environmentally and socio-culturally viable. Therefore espousing the ingenious agricultural heritage of the Apatanis could help ensure food security without compromising on the needs of future generations.

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Table 1: Diversity of indigenous methods of fish production in rice paddy environments of Northeast India.

Indigenous Methods	Rice field capture fishery system	Wild aquatic cropping system	Mountain valley rice-fish farming system	Running water terrace rice-fish farming system
Rice Paddy Type	Lowland, deep-water		Highland, shallow-water	
	Rain-fed	Irrigated		Rain-fed
Fishery Type	Most primitive as exclusive capture fishery of wild fish only	Moderately primitive as capture fishery along with some culture fishery, of wild fish only	Moderately advanced as culture fishery of carps along with some capture fishery of wild fish	Most advanced as exclusive culture fishery of mostly the common carp
Geographical Distribution	Floodplains of Assam	Foothills of all Northeast states	Mountain valleys of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura	Mountain slopes of Arunachal Pradesh Meghalaya and Sikkim

Economic Productivity	45-280 kg/hectare/year (Das 2002: 44)	200-300 kg/hectare/year (Das 2002: 44)	About 200 kg/hectare/year (Das 2002: 44)	Up to 500 kg/hectare/year (Saikia and Das 2008: 126)

Table 2: Traditional agricultural calendar of the Apatanis of Ziro valley, Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India.

Month	**Local Name**	**Agricultural Activities and related Rituals and Festivals**
January	*Murung Pulo*	Application of manure in paddy fields; repairing of bunds, fences and canals; the Murung festival as a fertility rite.
February	*Karpa Pulo*	Application of manure in paddy fields; raising of rice seedlings in nursery beds.
March	*Myoko Pulo*	Stubble burning, plot levelling and other preparation of paddy fields; raising of fingerlings in fish ponds; the Myoko festival as a kinship feast; the *myokung* ritual for soil fertility; the *kide* ritual to protect crop from pests and diseases.
April	*Halying Pulo*	Beginning of rice transplantation; plating of millets and maize; first release of fingerlings in fish pits; the *tamu* ritual for protecting crop from pest attacks.
May	*Enda Pulo*	Weeding of paddy fields.
June	*Empii Pulo*	Weeding of paddy fields.
July	*Millo Pulo*	Harvesting of early-maturing rice and millets, and earlier batch of fish; further release of fingerlings in fish pits; the Dree festival as the main agricultural celebration; the *sodu* ritual for adequate rainfall and plentiful harvest.
August	*Haalo Pulo*	Weeding of paddy fields.
September	*Bunchi Pulo*	Weeding of paddy fields; the *yapung* ritual to protect the crop from natural calamities.
October	*Bunti Pulo*	Harvesting of late-maturing rice, millets and maize, and later batch of fish.
November	*Emmo Pulo*	Application of manure in paddy fields; repairing of fencings.
December	*Nenka Pulo*	Application of manure in paddy fields; paddy field left fallow for livestock grazing.

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Deforestation and Feminisation of Poverty: A Real Experience from Nayagram Block, Jhargram District, West Bengal

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Abstract: 'Feminisation of poverty', the term coined by Diana Pearce in 1978 simply explains three distinct issues: women face a higher proportionate percentage of poverty than men; women's poverty is more severe than men, and, the incidence of poverty among women is increasing compared to that of men. The relation between women and their immediate environment is very close in the forest villages of rural India. The economic condition of these villagers is not so satisfactory. The womenfolk are poorer than their counterpart. Mostly women are responsible for the daily household jobs, and also contribute to the family income. They depend on forests resources for their household requirements and earning also. Deforestation is a life threat to them; it affects their time, labour and money resulting in further poverty. Thus, women are not only victimised in economic terms but also in social terms. This study narrates a real experience of 'feminisation of poverty' in rural marginal forest villages of Nayagram Block of Jhargram District in West Bengal. This study shows how deforestation, the only one reason of environmental degradation, enhances poverty among women

Keywords: *Feminisation of poverty, incidence, environment, deforestation, experience, income*

Introduction

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) stated that *"the burden of poverty borne by women, especially in developing countries"*. Not only lack of income is the key factor of poverty but also gender biasness and deprivation of capabilities in the societies are equally responsible for poverty. In developing nations like India, society is patriarchal in nature. Women are oppressed in every aspect, especially, from the view point of economic independence. Traditionally, women are dependent upon men as males are the primary earning members within the family. Women are simply treated as domestic worker or the 'unpaid labourer' of the family. Economic condition of women is more distressed than their counter part. Their sphere revolves only around their family.

The term 'feminisation of poverty' first coined by Diana Pearce in 1978, has explained three distinct issues. First, women face a higher proportionate percentage of poverty than men. Second,

women's poverty is more severe than men, and, third, the incidence of poverty among women is increasing compared to that of men.

This scenario has changed with time. At present, women too contribute to their family income, like their male counterparts. Women particularly those living in rural areas of third world countries, play a significant role in managing natural resources. Their task in economic sector as well as household maintenance makes them the daily managers of the living environment. Traditional interpretation of gender equates women with nature and men with culture (Kelkar and Devnathan 1991). "Nature as *Prakriti* is inherently active, a powerful, productive force in the dialectic of the creation, renewal and substance of all life" (Shiva 1988). Thus, women particularly are more vulnerable in terms of economic stability. This is mainly because they have least economic opportunities compared to others. Agriculture cannot support their livelihood because they have minimum landholdings and all of these are not fully cultivable. History shows that agriculture, pottery making, spinning of cotton, wool, flax, and silk are the primary occupations of women (Kosambi 1965). Women have lesser access to productive resources such as land (Agarwal 1986a). Most of the forest dwellers are largely dependent on the natural resources of the forest and women are an integral part of it because women are the primary collectors of these products. Women's absolute contribution to household subsistence from their wage earnings in the poor households are typically significant, which sometimes equal to men's and at other times greater than those of men (Gulati 1978). In marginal areas it is a real experience that how much women earn by their own and have spent all the money on the welfare of the family. They have no savings for their own, no expenditure on self-desires. When there is no collection of forest products, they have no money in their hands. Therefore, they cannot enjoy economic stability and become poorer than male.

Deforestation is the one of the key challenges for rural women in West Bengal from the economic point of view as they are highly dependent on forest products, especially in forest regions. It has been observed from field survey that forest dwellers are responsible for deforestation because they know that forest is their life savers. Deforestation and degradation of forest occurs due to illegal activities of outsiders in general, and by a few corrupted forest officials in particular.

Several schemes are introduced by Government of India to increase women's economic empowerment. For example, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, (MGNREGA), Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls 2011, (Sabala), Priyadarshini, 2011 etc. These schemes have enhanced women’s economic empowerment in rural India. These Schemes have witnessed mass women participation but still women are primarily dependent on the forest products. There is also gender discrimination in wage rate. Wage rate of women is markedly lower than men. "Thus, there has been a feminisation of poverty in which environmental degradation and pollution have a severe effect particularly in rural areas" (WHO 1990).

Literature Review

Women, and especially those in female-headed households, are often directly dependent on consumption and sale of forest resources than men (Dovie 2003; Khare et al 2000). In multiple societies, men enjoy higher ownership rights than women (Agarwal 2010; Ostrom, 1990;

Rocheleau & Edmunds 1997). From the previous studies it has been noticed that though women's participation in forest management organisation such as forest user group (FUG), raises incomes of women and promotes resource receptivity (Agarwal 2001, 2009; Upadhyay, 2005), but they are tend to be underrepresented in those groups (Agarwal 2001; Das 2011; Kelkar & Nathan 2003). This is mainly because of gender difference in accessing technology and lack of participation of women in resource management organisations (Nuggehalli & Prokopy 2009; Reed 2010). Gender differentiation in labour force and contributions to household earnings are influenced by several factors with varying degrees of influence. These factors are ethnicity, class, and caste, household composition, age, marital status etc. (Byron & Arnold 1999; Cavendish 2000; Cousins 1999; Shackleton & Shackleton 2010). It has been noticed in the literature on gender and development is that income controlled by mothers is more often spent on children's health, education and food, than income controlled by fathers (Blumberg 1988; Kennedy & Peters 1992; Kishor 2000).

It is very common that uneducated and poor women who primarily rely on non-timber forest products (NTFP) are often receive lower status in society than male ones. Women are generally treated as the unpaid labourer of the family. Women are continuously performing traditional roles in the home and limited within household activities, which may restrict their mobility or to participate in the commercial activities on a full-time basis. (Shackleton et al 2008). Women farm workers often receive lower pay than their male counterparts in South Africa and they are 'permanent seasonal workers' who do not even receive any bonus while their male counterparts receive bonus in the same category of work. Oppression continues regarding child care facilities which is not provided at the farm. In one hand, women are intended to return to work after the birth of their child to ensure the livelihood of the family while on other hand, lack of child care facilities at the work place forces them to remain unemployed (Kehler 2001). Thus, women fielded at the lower end of the value chain.(Carr and Hartl 2008; Shackleton et al 2010). It is widely accepted that women's position in society is determined both by their status as paid employee, and the status according to their reproductive and domestic role' (Hakim, 1996). Thus, women are the most vulnerable in the workforce, trimming will affect them more compare to their male counterparts (Kehler 2001).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular Goal 3 – "to promote gender equity and empower women", have incited an attention to socio-economic empowerment of poor women in both formal and informal employment. (Jones et al 2008). This is a step to combat poverty of women. Concept of poverty and its measures determined by the indicator of social well-being or in other words, access to those indicators of social well-being. (Dasgupta & Weale 1992). Key factors of well-being are welfare, health and human rights while the availability of shelter, health care, education facilities and income are first line indicators of well-being. (May et al 2000)

Objective

This paper mainly focuses on women's dependency on forest and estimating how deforestation is responsible for enhancing threats of poverty to rural marginal women.

Methodology

A pilot survey was conducted to get an overall idea on the effect of deforestation on the nearby villagers, especially on women of forest covered regions in Nayagram Block and also to minimise research gaps. Primary survey has been done based on a predefined, structured questionnaire and personal interviews. Data from questionnaire survey are tabulated, deforestation ratio, degraded forest cover of the study area has been calculated and analysed by using proper techniques. To fulfil the objectives of the present study the stratified random sampling technique has been applied. Sample strata have been divided on the basis of caste, tribe and income. A total of 200 samples are collected from the selected four mouzas. Samples are well distributed among the SC and ST families along with the other caste families. Samples are defined based on some criteria which lead the study towards its desired goal. These include:

- Mouzas having forest cover
- Scheduled category dominated ethnic structure
- Poor family economy
- Evidences of deforestation

Types of forest products collected,on which villagers largely rely, are divided into the following four categories: i) fuel wood for domestic use, ii) small twigs, wood, bark for sale, iii) mushroom for personal consumption and sales iv) green leaf of Sal, Kendu and grass and shrub for making broom sticks for sale.
Sample distributions of the study are as follows-

Table No.1 Sample Families for Household Survey.

Mouzas	**No of Families**	**SC[1]**	**ST[2]**	**Other**
Bhalukbasa,	38	2	24	12
Shitalpura,	99	34	40	25
Dalkisol	12	4	6	2
Balimuri	51	17	19	15
Total	200	57	89	54

Now the question is why women are the targeted group? The answer is very simple. Women are mostly involved in collection of forest products like fuel wood; small twigs, branches, bark; mushroom of all edible types; green Sal and Kendu leaves and broom sticks etc. Women are closely related to Mother Nature. Woman / Nature nexus played out historically in the dominant western culture (Griffin 1981). The above mentioned products are used for both domestic and commercial

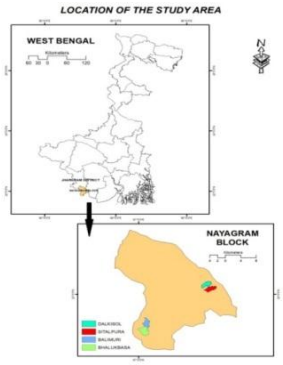
purposes. Deforestation gradually reduces the opportunity to earn money, particularly for women. Thus, deforestation is directly related with women's poverty in rural India. This study mainly focuses on two themes: first, quantitative analysis of collection of few selected forest products; secondly, quantitative analysis of time spent for the collection of forest products. Women are categorised into two groups for collection of samples: (i) women from scheduled category as they are highly dependent on forest-based economy, and (ii) women belonging to poor income group (having monthly income of less than 2000 rupees). The selection was made with a view to the fact that the impact of deforestation is highly expensive for them as they mostly sustain their daily needs from forest products.

About the Study Area

This study is based on the four mouzas of Nayagram Block, Jhargram district[3] of West Bengal namely Bhalukbasa, Shitalpura, Dalkisol and Balimuri. Nayagram is the border block of Jhargram district which shares common boundary with Odisha. Among these four mouzas Bhalukbasa and Balimuri are located near to Odisha. All the four selected mouzas are located near the forest areas of Jhargram district.

Villagers, especially women of Bhalukbasa, Shitalpura, Dalkisol and Balimuri are highly dependent on the forest products. This area is generally termed as economically backward area as there are not too many alternative opportunities for income. Extreme climatic condition, inadequate supply of water, infertile lateritic soil, less purchasing power of agricultural technology, very small landholdings and inadequate financing are the basic hindrances of economic backwardness of this region. Illiteracy is one of the soul constraints behind generation of diversified employment opportunities. Thus, people of this region primarily earn their livelihood from the forest. Women dwellers are the primary collector of forest products such as fuel wood, small twigs, branches, bark, and mushroom of all edible types, green Sal and Kendu leaves.

Fig No.1 Location of the Study Area.



Source: Compiled from Block Level Land and Revenue Department, Government of West Bengal, 2016.

Population statistics of the study areas are as follows-

Table No.2- Population Statistics of the Study Areas

Mouzas	JL. No	Number of Families				Total Population	Total Male Population	Total Female Population	Total Area (Hectare)
		SC	ST	Other	Total				
Bhalukbasa,	174	2	24	12	38	162	85	77	259.36
Shitalpura,	146	107	85	92	284	1174	573	601	322.86
Dalkisol	138	4	6	2	12	43	19	24	131.52
Balimuri	172	24	19	33	76	405	212	193	88.31

Source: Household Survey

Ethnicity and Economy

Income is one of the important parameters of social wellbeing (Smith, 1973). A family is capable to sustain all its basic desires when they have an adequate income. Income is the key determinant of poverty. In our study area, a large number of families belong to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category and it is needless to say that they also belong to tribal groups. Throughout the survey this study tries to explore the reason behind the ground reality of poverty in Bhalukbasa, Shitalpura, Dalkisol and Balimuri. The outcome of the survey depicts that almost half (45 percent) of the ST families have the monthly income of less than 2000 rupees. It is very unfortunate that there is no ST family whose income is more than 8000 rupees per month. Not only the tribal families but also the Scheduled Caste and other caste families have almost similar economic condition in the all four mouzas (Table 3).

It is very clear that an income structure is purely dependent on primary economic activities. As it is stated earlier in this article, due to lack of agricultural activities the dwellers of the Bhalukbasa, Shitalpura, Dalkisol and Balimuri are highly dependent on the forest products. They sustain their livelihood from the collection of these products. Women take the lead role in collecting those forest products and even they sell it in the local market to feed their families. Male members of the family are busy in migratory jobs or they are the sellers in the local markets of those products which are collected by their spouse or daughters or mother from the local forest. So, women are the supplier and male members of the family are the receiver of the benefit. The income is not shared by the male member with their counterparts on the pretext of running the family. If in some cases income is handed over to the female family member then it has been also directed that in which purpose, she has to spend the money. Therefore, the question is who is poorer? Of course, the women. Their poverty is more severe than men. They do not enjoy the freedom to spend the income as per their desires although they are the principal collectors of the forest products. They took the risk of going to the jungle for earning the minimum income to sustain their livelihood. This makes their situation

more vulnerable as women are victimised by several criminal activities, attacked by wild animals, and suffered from several chronic diseases. On one hand the income earned by women has been spent on the family welfare and on other hand there is a threat of reducing their income because of deforestation. In both ways' women become the poorest of the poor.

Table No.3 Families of Different Income Groups.

Income Group (Rupees/Month)	Ethnic Family (%)		
	SC	ST	Other
Less than 2000	16	45	16
2001-4000	29	32	20
4001-6000	32	21	37
6001-8000	17	2	18
More than 8000	6	0	9

Source: Computed through Primary Survey

Gender Role behind the Collection of Forest Products

Human beings are the integral part of nature. People who live near the forest areas are closest to mother earth. As it is stated earlier the villagers of the four mouzas are primarily dependent on the forest products. They collect fuelwood, small twigs, mushrooms, Kendu leaves, Sal leaves etc both for domestic and commercial purposes. This study tries to explore the gender role behind the collection of such forest products. Survey stated that women are mostly associated with this form of primary activities. They contribute to the family income, but a clear differentiation exists among the ethnic groups on this issue. ST women are remarkable in taking charge of the forest products collection rather than the male members. 77 percent of ST women are involved in collection while only three percent male are doing this job. Remaining 20 percent are credited to both male and female. The Scheduled Tribe families (here Santhals and Mundas) are female headed. Females own the responsibility of running the family and work harder than males. Among the SC families 42 percent women, and, 39 percent men are the primary collectors (Table 4).

Table No.4 Gender Role in Collection of Forest Products.

Ethnic Group	Total Families	Male (%)	Female (%)	Both Male and Female
SC	57	39	42	19
ST	89	3	77	20
Other	54	58	32	10

Source: Household Survey.

There is a difference in attitude among the ethnic groups. Status of women is not so dignified in the SC families. The men folk think that these are the duties of women only. Here is a basic distinction

between ST an SC families. It is true that the participation rate among Scheduled Caste and Tribal females is higher than the non-scheduled caste females (Raju and Bagchi, 2013). Women of ST families are forced to work due to their custom, whereas women of SC families are forced to do so due to their inferior status in the society. On the other hand, participation of women from General caste is much lower than male because of the patriarchal outlook. Men think, such kind of activities does not match with their status. For the difference in attitude towards women participation in economic activities results in a huge participation of women from ST families.

Deforestation and Poverty

It has been already proved that over time the study area experienced huge amount of deforestation and degradation of forest cover. Deforestation and degradation of forest deteriorate both the quality and quantity of forest products. Villagers of nearby villages are highly dependent on forest products: both domestically and commercially. Villagers in general and women in particular face too many challenges due to loss of forest cover. Their life became difficult because they lost one of the important sources of their income. Another significant fact is that women now have to spend more time to collect these products. The traditional Indian ideology is that man is linked with the public domain and considered as the bread-earner whereas women's place is inside the house with the responsibilities of child bearing, child care, cooking and cleaning etc. (Boserup, 1970). Thus, additional time spent in collection of forest products hampered the traditional duties of women. In the following sections these two facts will be discussed extensively to answer the basic questions that why and how rural women of forest regions in West Bengal gradually become poorer due to deforestation.

Loss of Money at The Cost of Deforestation

People of the Bhalukbasa, Shitalpura, Dalkisol and Balimuri mouzas earn their livelihood from the forest products which are collected from the nearby forest. Modern amenities for cooking, such as, LPG stove, induction oven etc are rarely available in these areas. Also, the tribal people or economically marginal people are unable to purchase such luxurious items at a very high cost. A large segment of populations of these four mouzas primarily use fuel wood for cooking. Especially the tribal people are highly dependent on the fuel wood. This huge demand of fuel wood is fulfilled from the local forest. As per 2011 Census of India, 60.51 percent households use fuel wood for cooking in Paschim Midnapore district of West Bengal.[4]

Purchasing fuel wood from the market left most of the families unfed for several days, as they do not have sufficient income. The local forest saved them from the threats of severe poverty on a daily basis. The threat of deforestation thus effects the life of the people. The authors have tried to find out impacts of deforestation on the economically marginalized people, especially the women. First, we have tried to measure the impact of deforestation on the loss of quality as well as quantity of forest products in monetary forms. Villagers living in the fringe of forests collect various products from forest.

Primary survey states that between 2011 and 2016 there is a monthly loss of 140 Rupees in Bhalukbasa, 193 Rupees in Balimuri, 70 Rupees in Dalkisol and 210 Rupees in Shitalpura for the loss of collection of fuel wood. 60 kg of fuel wood loss in Shitalpura mouza per month was because of the high rate of deforestation and degradation of forest. This is the highest loss of fuel wood among the four mouzas. Other mouzas faced similar problems as Shitalpura. Economically this is a huge amount of loss for the marginal people. Presently they are forced to purchase such amount of fuelwood from the market. Thus, deforestation is a serious issue in those areas resulting in increased poverty among the villagers of Bhalukbasa, Shitalpura, Dalkisol and Balimuri mouzas.

On the other hand, loss of forest cover reduces the income from other major forest products like small twigs, wood, bark, mushroom, green leaf of Sal and Kendu, broom sticks etc. Mushroom is one of the demandable forest products in the local markets as well as in markets of nearby towns like Jhargram, Midnapore, and Kharagpur etc. Gross monetary loss of those forest products estimated to 555 Rupees, 708 Rupees, 755 Rupees, 655 Rupees per month in Bhalukbasa, Balimuri, Dalkisol, Shitalpura mouza respectively (Table:5). Thus, the villagers of these four mouzas suffered from both ends i.e. domestic purpose and commercial purpose. A monthly loss of 755 Rupees is very costly for economically marginalised people. Loss of forest cover in every year successively kicked villagers in general and women in particular in the curse of poverty.

This leads to two questions. First, how such amount of loss of forest products hampered their livelihood as they do purchase their additional needs from the local market? Yes, they suffer. Presently they need to carry out an additional expenditure to sustain their livelihood on daily basis but their income has not increased successively. Thus, they continuously lose themselves in the darkness of poverty. They become forced to drop their children from school, lost their desires, indebted and suffered a lot due to several economic constraints. Domestic and commercial use of such forest products somehow reduced their family expenditure in terms of liquid money.

Second, how women are suffering and how are they victimised by poverty as this is the problem of the entire region? The answer to this question is hidden in another question, which is, who deal with the basic expenditures of a family in India? Women. Yes, women are the principal auditor in most of the families in India. Men hand over their partial income or sometimes full income, and, direct women to run the family expenditure. But how to run the family with such a minimum earning? Men usually do not interfere in such matters. Therefore, the struggle begins for women. Minimum earnings, along with it a loss of income due to a loss of collection of forest products, make it difficult for women to manage the family household. Loss of income from forest products or purchase of fuelwood from the market makes their life harder year by year. To overcome these challenges women put their lives at risks. Sometimes they keep themselves unfed to adjust the loss of income. There are remarkable inequalities in the allocation of household necessities: women work for longer hours, suffer from poorer health condition due to lesser food intake (Dreze and Sen, 1990). This worsens the situation. Insufficient food consumption and hard work result in malnutrition and anaemia. It even reduces their life span. Not only women but children also suffer. Malnutrition of the mother, especially the pregnant woman, affects the health of the new born baby. Deforestation leads the society of these areas towards an uncertain future. A healthy generation is

the potential resource for a better society or mandatory for a bright future. An empty stomach never nourished a mother's womb. Thus, the effect of poverty is more severe for women than men. It's a serious threat to society.

Table No.5 Loss of money at the cost of deforestation.

Mouza	Collected Products from Forest (Quantity/Month/Family)																
	Fuel Wood for Domestic Use				Small Twigs, Wood, Bark Etc For Sale				Mushroom				Green Leaf of Sal And Kendu and Broom Stick				
	2011	2016	Loss of Quantity (Kg)	Loss of Price (Rs/Month)	2011	2016	Loss of Quantity (Kg)	Loss of Price (Rs/Month)	2011	2016	Loss of Quantity (Kg)	Loss of Price (Rs/Month)	2011	2016	Loss of Quantity (Bundle)	Loss of Price (Rs/Month)	**Total Monetary Loss (Rs)****
Bhalukbasa	150	110	40	140	160	90	60	210	2	1.5	0.5	100	12	9	3	105	**555**
Balimuri	160	105	55	193	180	110	70	245	2	1	1	200	11	9	2	70	**708**
Dalkisol	140	120	20	70	190	110	80	280	3	1.5	1.5	300	13	11	3	105	**755**
Shitalpura	180	120	60	210	170	120	50	175	2	1	1	200	10	8	2	70	**655**

Source: Estimated from Household Survey.

** Estimation of monetary loss of forest products has been done on the basis of local market price.

Loss of Money at the Cost of Excess Time Spent for the Collection of Forest Products

Loss of forest cover increased the travel distance successively in recent years resulting in a deeper travel to the forest for collecting forest products. In this context it has been observed that within a five year of interval (between 2011 and 2016) an additional loss of 1.3 hours for fuelwood collection occur in all the selected four mouzas of Jhargram District. For collecting other mentioned forest products, they have to spend more time than the previous years (Table 6).

Table 8 showed the whole scenario: how much extra time they have to spend in 2016 as compared to 2011 for the collection of forest products. Deforestation is the sole reason for such a situation. Time is money. Thus, total extra time has been calculated in terms of wage rate as per agricultural labourer (Rs 200 per six hours). Finally, we have calculated the total monetary loss per head per family. It has been observed that the villagers of Bhalukbasa, Balimuri Mouza each bear a loss

1551 Rupees per month, and, the villagers of Dalkisol and Shitalpura Mouza each bear a loss of 1502 Rupees per month. It is a big amount for the economically marginal families. They would formulate a better standard of living than the present based on such income. Such a huge monetary loss is one of the major hindrances behind the poverty of this region as well as for the women. As women are the principal collector of such forest products, they directly suffered for such kind of economic failure.

Table No.6 Loss of money at the cost of excess time spending for collection of forest products.

Mouza	**Collected Products from Forest (Hours Spent per Day)**															
	Fuel Wood for Domestic Use				Small Twigs, Wood, Bark etc. For Sale				Mushroom				Green Leaf of Sal And Kendu and Broom Stick			
	2011	2016	Loss of Time (Hours)	Days Engaged/Year	2011	2016	Loss of Time (Hours)	Days Engaged/Year	2011	2016	Loss of Time (Hours)	Days Engaged/Year	2011	2016	Loss of Time (Hours)	Days Engaged/Year
Bhalukbasa	3	4.3	1.3	120	4	6.3	2.3	100	1.3	2.3	1	40	4	6.3	2.3	60
Balimuri	4	5.3	1.3	120	5	7.3	2.3	100	2.3	3.30	1	40	5	7.3	2.3	60
Dalkisol	2	3.3	1.3	120	3	5.3	2.3	100	1	2	1	40	3	5	2	60
Shitalpura	5	6.3	1.3	120	6	8	2	100	3	4.3	1.3	40	5.3	8	2.3	60

Source: Estimated from Household Survey.

Table No.7 Loss of Money in Terms of Excess Time Spending for Collection of Forest Products.

Mouzas	Loss of time in hour/year	Loss of time in Hour/month	Conversion of time into wage rate of agricultural labour (Rs 200/6 hours)
Bhalukbasa	564	47	1551
Balimuri	564	47	1551
Dalkisol	546	45.5	1502
Shitalpura	546	45.5	1502

Source: Computed from the responses of the respondents through Household Survey.

Feminisation of Poverty

Deforestation results in a loss of more than 2000 rupees per month leaving the poor family poorer. In the initial section of this article it has been observed that most of the families have a monthly income of less than 2000 rupees per month (Table:2). There is a loss of more than 2000 rupees per family per month only for the deforestation and degradation of forest cover (Table 8). Deforestation

restricts them to economically upgrade themselves from the lower income group. Thus, the societal progress also gets interrupted because of cutting down of trees by some culprits for their personal benefits. But the impact of falling down of the tress directly hampered the daily life of poor families of surveyed mouzas.

This monetary loss is not the loss of the family or not of the male members. It is actually the loss of women who earn this money. They spend their quality time. They take the risk. They do hard work for earnings. But deforestation and degradation of forest hampered their income. Women are successively losing their earnings day by day, becoming poorer and frequently falling sick due to over work and lack of nutritional food intake. Thus, feminisation of poverty accelerates in those economically backward regions of West Bengal simply because of deforestation.

The darn of poverty prevails in the life of the villagers especially for women of these areas. If there was no occurrence of continuous deforestation then they would have been able to live an easier life than the present time. Women can run the family expenditure with little less difficulties. They would lead a more joyful economic, social and cultural life, particularly, those women who have to spend more time to collect the forest products. If they are not forced to spend extra time on collection of forest materials then they could spend more time for caring their children, family, and particularly for herself.

Table No.8 Monthly Total Loss of Money per Family Because Of Deforestation and Degradation of Forest Cover.

Mouzas	Loss of money (Rs)/month/Family*
Bhalukbasa	2106
Balimuri	2259
Dalkisol	2257
Shitalpura	2157

* Loss of money (Rs)/month/Family in this table is the sum of loss of money of table no 6 and table no 8.

Conclusion

It has been clearly observed that deforestation imposed a serious threat on the people of the study area. Villagers of this region are primarily dependent on the neighbouring forest. Their sustenance of livelihood is mostly dependent on the forest product. Though men are involved on such job but major responsibilities are upon women. Loss of forest cover reduces the supply of forest products on which villagers are highly dependent in terms of domestic and commercial use. Poverty devour their desires, happiness and forced them to struggle only for survival.

Women are facing more challenges than the men in this region. They play a dual role. On one hand they collect the forest products and sell them in the markets. On the other hand they take care of children and other family members and also do other household activities. They spend several extra times per day to collect the forest products because they are forced to travel more distance as forest boundary is continuously retreating. This extra time is the quality time for a mother because they are unable to spend such valuable time for caring their children or family members. They are also

losing their income day by day. Generally, women are supposed to run the family expenditure with the minimum earnings, handed over by their husband. Thus, they become victimised under the curse of poverty. In a family of Indian society if there is shortage of food then women members usually sacrifice themselves by consuming her share and feed her beloved family members. If there should be sufficient income then women would not be suffering from hunger.

This study revealed the truth of poverty, caused by deforestation. It is just an emergency where we have to protect the forest cover. Deforestation and smuggling of forest products should be controlled immediately. Plantation programmes should be organised in those deforested areas with the help of local people and NGOs on a regular basis. Joint Forest Management policy need to be implemented to save those marginalized people from the curse of poverty.

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End Note:

[1]SC is the abbreviation of Scheduled Caste.
[2] ST is the abbreviation of Scheduled Tribe.
[3]Selected four mouzas are presently situated in Jhargram District of West Bengal. When the survey was conducted these mouzas were in the Paschim Midnapore District. Jhargram is the new born district of West Bengal which was formed in 2017.
[4]In 2011 Jhargram District was the part of Paschim Midnapore District of West Bengal. So that the 2011 Census report available as a whole for Paschim Midnapore District.

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A Study on The Marriage System of Colonial Bengal

Fairooz Jahan

Abstract: Marriages in colonial Bengal were jeweled with sets of customs and rituals which depended on the caste and class hierarchy of native people. But while talking about such an important aspect in colonial Bengal, one can not only focus on the natives. The foreign population of nineteenth and twentieth century Bengal mainly consisted of British who at first intended to trade here and later settled down with a long term plan to rule. During this long span, besides the political and economic sectors, social and personal lives of this population were equally vivid. Though there are discussions on native marriages in several research works, the British and Anglo-Indian or Inter-racial marriages in colonial Bengal are not much discussed. Till eighteenth century, the British mostly had affairs with native women in Bengal but their main families were in Britain. After finishing their economic ventures, they used to leave their native *bibis* and kids behind to join their families overseas. But since the beginning of colonial rule, great number of British began to be posted in Bengal and they stayed for long time, sometimes for lifetime. These young and mostly unmarried officials used to start and continue their married lives in Bengal during their postings. Unlike the natives, marriage for these British officials was complicated due to the scarcity of British women. Thus, many British officials found wives from native women and some British women also married native elites. But inter-racial marriages were often more complicated.

The objective of this study is to portray the main aspects of Bengali, British and inter-racial marriages in colonial Bengal, their resemblances and diversities and will shade some light on the sustainability of these ties.

Keywords: *Brides, grooms, customs, consent, qualification, sustainability, marriage, Bengal.*

Introduction

Though two different communities with different cultures and living patterns coexisted in British Bengal, marriage was one thing which was universal in both communities. The number of unmarried persons, other than the ones suffering from any physical or mental condition, was extremely small (Imperial Gazetteer, 1909: 43). But the nature of marriages was different. The natives of Bengal often came in contact with the British for economic and political purposes but never gladly considered them for the very sacred tie, marriage. Margaret MacMillan stated, "Indians thought British women mingled freely with men who were not relations, they wore low-cut dresses, danced in public places. In Indian society only prostitutes and dancing girls did such things." (MacMillan, 1988: 20) For the British, initially, marriage with local women was popular from 1713 onwards when the earliest marriage registers for the Church of England appeared (Ghosh, 2008: 39). The inter-racial marriages went up till mid-eighteenth century. However, by

around the 1860s, due to several social changes and challenges, an adverse attitude towards the natives became increasingly evident among the British (Sen, 2001:3). In this regard, Sen (2002:3) noted that "*even having a bibi gradually became a matter of shame*". The British men of nineteenth century did not want Indian wives for marriage, rather they wanted middle class British girls (MacMillan, 1988: 17).

It was easy for the natives to find their suitable matches as they were in their own land but for the British being in a minor community with very few women, it was hard. Among these women, there were single working-class women, widows of crown troops (Stanley, 1998: 14), and daughters of railway men, civilians and merchants. A very important source to find brides was the orphanages where many Eurasian girls could be found who were raised with such an intention (Anthony, 1962: 16). By 1920s the term Eurasian was replaced by Anglo-Indians and their number in Kolkata city was 13621, mainly located at *Bowbazar* (Thompson, 1923: 74). Interestingly, a large number of British women began to arrive in Bengal since 1780s to get grooms (Verenede, 1996: 2). The return of the first generation of British merchants and traders to Britain with all their riches created India's impression as 'El Dorado' (Banerjee, 2019: 52). According to Ghosh, (1970), between 1757 and 1800, there were 1581 "European marriages" in Bengal among which 2,626 Writers and Cadets, 3,500 non officials and about 10,000 troops (Ghosh, 1970: 60-61). Limited numbers of inter-racial marriages were still on the cards but these often brought complications.

Methodology

This study is a historical research which involves synthesizing data from primary sources like census reports, gazetteers, travelogues and autobiographies of nineteenth and early twentieth century which have been collected from the Central Library (Rare Section) of Dhaka University, Bangladesh. Numerous secondary sources like books, novels, articles, newspapers have been scrutinized to understand different perspectives on different marriage systems of colonial Bengal.

Requisite qualifications for brides and grooms

While discussing the native marriages, Majumdar (2000:6) noted that "*the qualifications needed in a groom were clearly marked by colonial origins, while those sought in a bride sound traditional*". For British, this was partially true too. While the prime concern for grooms was their socio-economic position, women had to possess a set of qualifications to have a good marriage alliance. Here some core factors of colonial Bengal marriage system have been discussed.

Caste

According to LSSO' Malley, till nineteenth century, caste was only a matter relating to marriage and caste paid most attention at the maintenance of its marriage customs. In colonial society, endogamy, exogamy and hypergamy were all in force. If the caste was endogamous, the bride and the bridegroom had to be of the same caste and sub-caste. If the caste was exogamous, the parties had to be of the same but could belong to different clans; where hypergamy was practiced, man from higher castes could take wives from a lower class. Elites of the society could keep concubines or escorts from lowers classes (O'Malley, 1932: 90). But for women it was an essential subject to marry into one of the same or higher castes. This created a much disgraceful custom of colonial Bengal, kulinism. To maintain caste chastity the Brahmans aspired to get their daughters married to

the kulin Brahmans, the highest in the caste hierarchy and this gave the Kulins opportunity to take marriage as a profession. On the other hand, like other foreign invaders, the British were untouchables. Margaret Macmillan pointed, "Strict Hindus dared not to eat with them, barely remain in the same room" (MacMillan, 1988: 13). However, by the end of nineteenth century, caste rigidity began to decline. According to Majumdar (2009:6), "*the homogenization of caste was indicative of the emergence of a new kind of urban identity- bhadralok".* In a marriage periodical *Ghatak* in 1927, for a *'Mukhya Kulin'* girl, there was no objection with a non-kulin groom (Mitra, 1927: 74).

Though the British always considered the native caste oriented marriage system as backwardness, they were not completely free from it. A common concern in the British society of Bengal was the fall of a British in the clutches of a wrong woman with "suspicious Indian blood" (MacMillan 1988: 132). Even the Eurasian women who married British men of high social status were never considered the same and could only expect to become second-class Europeans and the working-class British husbands who chose to stay in India became "domiciled European", a category barely distinguishable from the Eurasian (Anderson 2011: 151). But the British were not on the extreme side while considering marrying the natives. By the nineteenth century the British were the ruling elites and they knew that to protect the Raj, solidarity among the two communities was important.

Age

For native males in Bengal, age was not a binding fact as it was for the females. Though, through the Age of Consent Act of 1891 the age of marriage for girls was set at twelve, in traditional families, daughters had to be married before attaining puberty. But with time the age of marriage among the natives gradually raised among the higher castes mainly because of education and enlightenment. British women who arrived in Kolkata were of different age groups. For them, marriage would take place after the girl had attained puberty at varying intervals (Thompson, 1923: 222). But often they were married at a very young age in Bengal. William Huggins termed such young British brides as "women-children" (Huggins, 1824: 102). Generally the junior most ones used to get the best match, the high officials in Kolkata. It was said that the comparatively aged women had to find grooms from outside of Kolkata (Sur, 2019: 82). Thus there was demand of younger girls for marriage as according to the men, the younger brides could be molded easily to adopt the Kolkata culture. But, British grooms in Bengal on the other hand were good deal older than their wives as they had to wait to get promoted to good positions and for young women from Britain (MacMillan, 1988: 133).

Explicit qualifications for males

In case of native grooms, the general requirements included- caste hierarchy, family position and financial condition. According to Rochona Majumdar, "participation in public life and civil society" was gaining more importance for grooms (Majumdar, 2009:41). In his travelogue, George Johnson mentioned, knowledge of the English language was considered by the Hindus a high qualification (Johnson, 1843: 231). Whereas, in British community, professional position and income of the groom were the vital requirements for marriage. British Officials of Indian Civil Service were often compared to Brahmins, the 'heaven born' at the summit of caste system (MacMillan, 1988: 129).

Rankings like lieutenants, collectors were also very lucrative. Even a very wealthy native male could be a good option too for these British women. "There was something about their being very rich that overrode the colour thing." one British girl opined about a native elite (Adams, 2012).

Explicit qualification of females

There was a set of qualifications required for women to score good in marriage market in both the communities. But the availability of native women and the scarcity of British women brought different treatments for them during marriage proceedings. While it was very rare to find British brides in Bengal, the difference in the proportion in native boys and girls in Bengal was not more than 4.2% in 1872 (Beverley, 1872: 151).

For native women, emphasize on *kula* or family mattered much to secure social dignity and the amount of dowry. The advertisement in *Ghatak* magazine also mentioned that the father of the girl was a "high level government employee who was able to pay three thousand rupees as dowry" (Mitra, 1927: 74). The other important requirements were age and physical beauty. George W Johnson stated, "She is wholely debarred from the benefits of knowledge, her beauty and her address constitute her chief accomplishments." (Johnson, 1843: 23) Often this lack of beauty had to be compensated by increased dowry. On the other hand, beauty wasn't the sole demand for English wife. With such a surplus of unmarried men, a British girl had to be very ugly not to find a match (Macmillan, 1988: 129). But they also had to possess number of requirements to be a good wife. Margaret Macmillan added, "Girls whether they were brought up in India or at Home, were given an education intended to equip them with the accomplishments that would make them desirable on the marriage market" (MacMillan, 1988:125).

Resemblance between the natives and the British brides

In both native and British communities, what was not wanted was an overeducated woman. Educated women were seen as threats to the age old patriarchy and chauvinism. It was mostly true for the natives who believed that wife's education will cause the death of husband. But emphasize on moderate educational qualification of females was a new trend in middle class family by the end nineteenth century (Majumdar, 2009: 42). One main prerequisite for marriage was the chastity of women. Chastity of women mattered the most in native marriages. To ensure this, girls were married off at a very young age. Surprisingly, even in the British society of Bengal, there was high demand of chastity of wives. Margaret Macmillan showed the case of a British woman who was brought up in Kolkata 'pure' and 'unsullied' and thus her grateful groom sent his mother-in-law a warm letter of thanks for bride's 'child-like-innocence' (MacMillan, 1988: 126). Another important thing was household expertise. From very young age, the native girls were given lessons on household chores from her family. It was important for the British women too, to have expertise in household activities. As they did not have helping hands from Britain and were not accustomed with the native servants, they were often under more pressure. But they were trained too, as from mid teens up to middle twenties British girls stayed with their parents and learned household basics from mothers (Gorham, 1982: 27). Organizing capability was a vital role for both community wives. While the British wives had to arrange parties on behalf of their husbands, the native wives had to arrange different *pujas* and other religious programs.

Finding a suitable match

Marriages among natives were mainly arranged and only the elder family members had the call. In most cases, a father would marry his son below and daughter above, his own rank, for the dowry and bride-gift respectively (Census of India 1891, 1893: 256). The brides and grooms did not have much opinion regarding the whole process, even they were not allowed to meet each other before wedding (Johnson, 1843: 229). A group of women and men, who were professional match makers (*ghataks*), used to bring suitable proposals to the families. Their demand was so high that by the end of 1920, marriage bureaus came into being (Majumdar, 2009: 37). In addition, by early twentieth century, there was an escalating influence of astrology in the native marriage market (Amrita bazar Patrika 26 March 1927). But change began to arrive from 1850s onwards when the demand for allowing the couples to marry of their own choice was regularly raised in families (Ray (ed.) 1995: 309).

Same was the case for the British brides whose courtships were done at home (Britain) while their partners were posted in Kolkata. These alliances were also fixed by the families and the couple had to depend on photographs and letters till engagement. In many cases the engagements were done years before wedding (MacMillan, 1988: 127). But those who came to Bengal to find own groom were lucky. These women had specially made arrangements to get introduced to eligible bachelors. The churches and the orphanages like Kidderpore Orphanage in Kolkata were known for holding monthly or weekly balls where British bachelors could introduce themselves to these women (MacMillan, 1988: 133). Secret societies like the “Spinsters' Secret Society” grew up consisting these British women to find suitable grooms (Nair (ed.) 1989: 202).

Marriage customs

Finding a proper match was just the beginning of an elaborate process of wedding rituals. The native marriage customs varied significantly as almost to defy general treatment (O'Malley, 1932: 92). George W. Johnson has described elaborately the native weddings he witnessed during his three years stay in Kolkata. From his account and the experiences of Mahendranath Dutta, a basic picture can be drawn. After picking a suitable match, both the families visited the brides and grooms respectively and presented them with few rupees not exceeding sixteen to twenty. A day was then fixed for the written contract called *pattur* when the dowry and dates of further ceremonies were also fixed. As planned a series of ceremonies like the anointment ceremony, wedding and reception were held, each ending with grand dinners. In the wealthy native weddings, there was showdown of wealth with fireworks, illuminations, musicians both native and English. In some instances a hundred thousand of rupees were spent (Johnson, 1843: 243-248). For the native elites, marriage was such expensive that Basu Mullick saw it as a cause of shrinking charities in Kolkata (Mullick, 1940: 40-41). But since twentieth century, different marriage ceremonies began to be performed without ostentations. Many elites began to follow the simple wedding styles ("Notun Bibaha Paddhati" 1910: 80-81). In nineteenth century society, widow remarriage was not encouraged on mass level. A man could marry a widow if it was his second or fourth marriage but never as a bachelor (O'Malley, 1913: 322). In native weddings, according to Mr. Baines, there was no registration of marriages and even if there were, the multiple ceremonies customary among the

natives would render the data of little service (Census of British India, 1883: 84). Moreover, the necessity of marriage in native society was so much that even prostitutes were even found married with "dagger, fig-tree or a bunch of flowers, in order to give her a social identity." (Hunter, 1881: 254)

Details about British weddings in Bengal can be found from the writing of Margaret Macmillan. After getting a suitable match, most couples arranged a wedding as much like one at home as possible. The bulk of the expenditure was bore by the grooms (Sur, 2019: 89). The couple used to get married in a church following the British style. They were surrounded with family and friends and grand wedding breakfast was arranged. There would be a white cake and a row of gifts (MacMillan, 1988: 135). According to a report on the ministry in Bengal published in 1836 in *The Times*, there were 132 exclusive chaplains paid by the government in the presidency of Bengal (Anderson, 2011: 129). Two registers for British marriages were maintained to record documents. However, Claudius Buchanan, an Anglican clergyman who once served as the vice principal of Fort William college, questioned the validity of British marriage all over India, in 1813 (Anderson, 2011: 125). Interestingly though, an influential, multi-volume work named 'Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer' which was regularly updated between 1754 and 1875 cleared the hoax to a certain extent. It was stated that, for the British subjects out of England, marriage according to the *lex loci* (law of the place) was recognized as a valid marriage and the Marriage Act in England was not mandatory for subjects stationed at foreign land (Chitty, 1837: 248).

One basic difference between the two community's marriages was the participation range. In British weddings formal arrangements were made and many relatives from Britain could not attend. On the other hand, the native weddings involved whole neighborhood. Many relatives and specially married women used to come and stay days before the wedding, celebrating and enjoying (Dutta, 1973: 65).

Wedding costume

For native brides, wedding meant a lot of jewelleries and red silk *sarees* with veil (Johnson, 1843: 249). But the period from 1870s onwards, women began to bring changes in *saree* draping and jewellery following Brahmika attire (Majumdar, 2009:140-41). But traditional jewelleries which were customary for women were big *noths*, silver anklets and toe rings. The rich brides used gold and pearls (Dutta, 1973: 48-49). The grooms, as Johnson described, wore silk vestments and ornaments of gold with precious stones (Johnson, 1843: 238). British marriage costumes in Bengal followed their own style. The groom wore traditional suit, The bride was always seen in white gown with clouds of white tulle, a veil with a 'circlet of Myrtle or orange blossom' which were brought from Home or from a big shop of Kolkata otherwise the tailor of Bengal would have done the job (MacMillan, 1988: 135).

Marital consent for women

The Age of Consent bill which was passed in 1891, made native girl's age of marriage twelve from ten. It was vehemently opposed by the common people on the ground that "married girls must cohabit with their husbands on the first appearance of their menstruation according to Hindu *shastras*" (Dainik Samachar Chandrika, 1891). While commenting on the Age of Consent Act of

1891, Rajendralal Mitra stated, "Hindu women are given away as cattle. How come their consents make any difference?" (Mitra, 1890) This was true in many cases where the prime concern of girls' families was to get them married at any cost to protect their social dignity and to lessen economic burden. Native girls were married at such a tender age that they did not have any single idea of marriage, let alone consent. In the first autobiography written by any Bengali woman, *Amar Jiban*, the author Rassundari Devi described her feeling during her marriage at the age twelve, "After all the wedding rituals, I was roaming around with my mother happily, thinking that the guests will leave soon" (Devi, 1876: 19). She had no idea that she would be leaving with them too. Even if she had, nothing would depend on her will. According to Tanika Sarkar, in nineteenth century Bengal, woman was not seen, as a person of an individual identity (Sarkar, 2000: 601). Rassundari Devi echoed the same thing where she mentioned that the status of native women in nineteenth century was not more than that of an animal (Devi, 1876: 40). Thus the question of their consent was a far cry. But a new change was gradually ushering among the educated elites of Bengal, regarding female consent. A prominent example was Satyendranath Tagore who decided to wait until his wife came to the age to be able to give her consent to start their conjugal life (Choudhurani,1957: 48-49). While it seems like the British women must had clear consent in the marriages, it was far from truth. Heather Lea Nelso's PhD thesis gives a true scenario- British martial law was notoriously gender biased which believed that women were naturally destined to be wives and mothers. The British women of nineteenth century were "too young", "less educated" to put consent. Moreover, ties which were fixed back in Britain gave no more than one option to the brides to put consent. Though women who came to India had several options, were often financially very unstable and had the urgency to settle down. Nelso (2015: 20) pointed out that "*further down the economic ladder, the more financial strains compromised women consent"*. This was very much true for the Eurasian brides of colonial Bengal who were at the bottom of the hierarchy. They were raised with sole aim of getting married, that too without any family or relatives around.

Inter-racial marriages in colonial Bengal

It was estimated that during the mid-18th century, 90% of the Englishmen in India had formally married either Indian or Eurasian women (Sen, 2001:3). More specifically, many officers of East India Company married into aristocratic families (Sen, 2001: 3). Therefore, it is evident from the wills of East India Company officials that more than one-third of the British men in the 1780s in India were leaving all their possessions either to Anglo-Indian children or to one or more Indian wives (Dalrymple, 2002). Author William Dalrymple recalled Sophia Pattle, born in Calcutta, who was descended from a Hindu Bengali woman from Chandernagore (Dalrymple, 2002). But nineteenth century saw a steady change and number of such marriages went down. Though very less in number, some significant inter-racial marriage alliances were still seen in documents. This section of the study attempts to explain the fact from both perspectives.

Native aspect

Though, socially not accepted, the Muslim and Hindu laws had some validation for these inter-racial marriages. In Muslim law, it was not mandatory for both parties to be Indian, or Muslim and for much of the nineteenth century, this was similar for the predominant Hindu community too

(Anderson, 2011: 136). Apart from religious tolerance, economic or political gain was another reason behind some of these marriages. For mutual benefit, the two communities often overcame caste and hierarchy barrier. British often found rich natives as useful patron and guide to know more about their colony. Whereas, some ambitious native fathers sometimes balanced their daughters' "loss of caste" for a British son-in-law‘s connections with the government and his assets in Britain (Anderson, 2011: 138).

European aspect

Mainly, poor British working class was keen to have inter-racial arrangements as the government was not interested to bring working class British women spending so much. Even for the middle class British like the soldiers, it was tough to get a British wife considering how high maintenance they were. According to Thomas Williamson, the annual expense on a European wife was about 600 pounds, whereas, a native woman could be kept well for 48 pounds a year (Williamson, 1810: 173-175, 414-415). Besides, as we saw, there was financial gain in inter-racial marriages. Stephen Lushington reported in 1824 about Eurasian girls in the Lower Military Orphan School, Bengal that "*to those who become the wives of soldiers, an allowance of four rupees each was paid from the public funds.*" (Lushington, 1824: 257) This financial incentive was important for many lower class British. Among the rich officials, loneliness and boredoms in Kolkata sometimes led them to marry native women, even if they had family back in Britain, as there was no legal obligation because if any Englishman's wife lived more than seven years abroad, he was free to remarry in native India (Anderson, 2011:127). Again, the wills of the period also show amazing ties of intense affection and loyalty on both sides in some inter-racial marriages. Many British men, during their departure, asked their close friends to care for their 'well beloved' Indian partners (Dalrymple, 2002).

Sustainability of the Marriages

The question of sustainability had different answers for these different kinds of marriages. Rate of sustainability was the highest among the natives of Bengal for obvious reasons. The brides and grooms both were from same environment and culture which helped both specially the girl to get adapted in the marriage fast. Being married as a child, the girl literally grew up in their in-laws house which made her accustomed to the house and household activities which were the main task of a native wife. According to Baghchi (1993: 2214), "*on the fragile shoulder of the girl child laid the burden of keeping the patriarchal structure of the family in place"*. Thus, wives were mainly occupied with the *andarmahal*. The fact that most of the native families were joint ones, often saved the wives from the loneliness that could have been caused by the absence of their busy husbands. Most of the time, they did not have any other expectation from their husbands apart from the financial support. Adultery of males was socially accepted and by the course of time, polygamy had become the hallmark of social prestige (Basu, 1983: 78). Among the natives divorce was opposed to the divine idea of marriage. But it was also permitted on such grounds as the disloyalty of the wife or her failure to bear a son (O'Malley, 1932: 94). However, the bill which empowered the Hindu wives to divorce leprous, impotent or insane husbands was vigorously opposed on religious grounds in Indian Legislative Assembly (O'Malley 1932: 94). Though the marriages sustained for the longest, in many cases they were unhappy ones. Rajat Kanta Ray pointed out that,

there was lack of mutual love in nineteenth century Bengali weddings (Ray (ed.), 1995:302). Mismatch was often made where educated elites were forcefully married to girl children, which created a thick emotional barrier between the two. The novel *Sei Somoy* by Sunil Gangopadhhay portrays such mismatched marriages through the characters like educated Ganganarayan and Nabinkumar and their uneducated child brides Lilavati, Sarojini respectively. Ganganarayan while describing his wife to his childhood friend Bindu stated that, "She's still a child. She's of no use to me." (Gangopaddhay, 1991: 125) The native couples were often not even allowed to meet during the day. A play in 1879-80 showed a mother-in-law cursing her daughter-in-law for talking to her husband at day time (Bhattacharyya, 1286: 34). Among the British couples of Bengal, sustainability rate was not as high as the native marriages, but was still good. In the foreign land, the two shared same foreign background and culture and could become each others' biggest supports. Unlike the native wives, the British women were their husbands' companions too. Marriage among British meant "joining the team, chanting slogans, cheering it on" Margaret Macmillan stated while adding that many women learned about their husbands' work and wrote up their notes (MacMillan, 1988: 144). Moreover, women who came in search of grooms, were mostly escaping hardship and miseries they faced in Britain. Some were previously engaged in prostitution in Britain (Collingham, 2001: 37). Many of these women failed to get a husband in their native land thus India was their sole option (Nair (ed.), 1989: 508). These women remained very grateful to their husbands and were satisfied with what Kolkata offered (Dewar, 1920:146). The fact that divorce was not easy in European Society as well, also worked behind the sustainability of the marriages. It was extremely difficult for women to obtain a divorce until the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act was passed. More specifically, the women could not divorce their husbands until the legislation of 1857 despite their sufferings from unhealthy marriage life and cruel experiences from their husbands and their in laws. Even after that, they mostly could not afford one. Divorce was very expensive and required evidence. An English divorce, mid-century, was worth 2,000 pounds (Anderson, 2011: 134). Also, if a woman before obtaining a divorce left her husband, she would lose lost all the right of claiming the property (Wood, 2018). But still, cases of separation if not legal divorce, were visible among British couples of Bengal. Unlike the native wives, the British wives had the option to go back to their own land, away from the previous life and start over again. One prime reason behind such separations was financial crisis. Even the "heaven-borne" ICS salary was not adequate to cover children's school fees and fairs (MacMillan, 1988: 141). So those who were escaping the hardship of their home, were again put into it. The second most important reason was the adjustment issue. British women faced great difficulties in adjusting in Bengal. Even the women raised in Kolkata had hard time adjusting if their husbands were posted in remote areas (MacMillan, 1988). Unlike the joint families of natives, the British families were nuclear in pattern. Thus, long distance between husband and wife could have a heavy toll on the relation. The British husbands often had to stay away for days for official postings whereas the wives had to accompany their kids who were sent to Britain for education, to supervise them (MacMillan, 1988: 158). This long distance often caused adultery. Even it was common for the lonely wives who were always the center of focus by lot of British eligible bachelors. Even the demand of British widow was very high. Mrs Postans wrote in her Memoir in 1838 that a widow of a British office in Kolkata got three marriage proposals from her husband's colleagues within three hours of her husband's death

(Martin, 1837: 45). Many British officials used to marry the widow of the civilians to get the 300 pound pension that she used to get. But by nineteenth century this stipend regulation began very strict and many widows stopped getting it. British officers whose main aim was to achieve this pension, began to abandon their wives. According to William Huggins, some British marriages in Kolkata turned to be so bitter and deadly that many British officials decided to stay unmarried (Huggins, 1824: 95).

Inter-racial marriages sustained much less than other marriage ties

Inter-racial marriages were already very few in number in nineteenth century Bengal and the existing ones faced extreme complexities. Anderson (2011: 153) stated that "*The status of mistress, illegitimate, and even orphan, were imposed on many Eurasian and Indian spouses and descendants".* Apart from the social outcaste, the inter-racial marriage was a huge political setback for British officials. This happened with British resident James Achilles Kirkpatrick, who married Khairun-Nissa, a fourteen years old daughter of the noble family of Hyderabad. After the marriage, Young Colonel Arthur Wellesley wrote to Kolkata that Kirkpatrick could not be trusted any more with any official works of British government (Dalrymple, 2002). Even in Britain, these marriages were valid but had no legal basis prior to the 1872 Marriage Act (Anderson, 2011: 135). There was still confusion over the legality of many marriages involving Europeans or Eurasians in India despite the enactment of the Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872 (Anderson, 2011: 124). The problem was worse in the lower class British men. At least the high officials with good moral values, married the native women following the native laws. But it was rare in lower category of British, especially who had temporary posting in Bengal. Margaret Macmillan correctly stated that the further down the social scale went, the less seriously either marriage or divorce taken (MacMillan, 1988: 142). British soldier regiments preferred creating temporary bonds with native women as their postings were often changed and called back home. The women in their ignorance about British law, assumed that they were properly married. But they were often deceived and left back. Even if they were legally married, many soldiers often used their posting back at Britain to cut the ties. Besides the couple, children borne out of such marriages were the most ill-fated. Generally the children used to get their fathers' nationality but much depended on other facts like skin colour and gender. When a Kolkata agent wrote to Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India, asking about his Indian step-grandchildren who were of mixed skin tones, it was suggested that the children would be shipped to Britain except the dark one (Dalrymple, 2002). Mostly, white male kids from these marriages had better chance to be sent to Britain than their sisters. Many inter-racial parents used to willingly abandon their kids too. There were military orphanages built in whole India for such kids and these were the kids who grew up as Eurasians. Bengal Military Orphan Society adopted a practice of paying its men on christening of their mixed-race children, with government contributing three rupees per month for each child (Annual Register, 1821: 32). Thus, a lot of children were separated from their inter-racial parents. Till date, there are men and women who blame India for separating them from their parents (MacMillan, 1988: 158).

Even this small range of intermixing did not last long: the rise of the Victorian Evangelicals in the1830s and 40s slowly killed the practice. Opening of Suez Canal in 1869 made coming of British women easy as transport cost was decreased (Farewell, 1990: 59-60). From the second and third

decade of the nineteenth century there was the desire from the government's side to elevate the British administrators of the city to a position of distinct identity (Banerjee, 1998: 39). According to Indrani Sen, "The diverse reasons for this change included the events of 1857, which caused a rift between the races, the establishment of empire, a consequent cultivation of an aloof imperial identity and, perhaps most important, the encouragement by the government of white, resident wives." (Sen, 2001: 3) Thus, the practice of marrying or cohabiting with Indian *bibis* quickly began to decline. More specifically, in 1780-1785, one in three had the willingness of turning up for the marriage, while it further declined in 1805 and 1810 to one in four and one in five respectively. By 1830, it stood to only one-in-six (Dalrymple, 2002).

Marriage: A male game

Just like the consent issue, native women had no separate identity after marriage. Many of them were literally forced to embrace practices such as strict purdah, endorsed malpractices like polygamy and their sole duty was to produce sons. In return they did not even get firm commitments from their husbands. A man could as unhesitatingly discard his wife as he "changed his dress" (Ray (ed.), 1995; 320). A wealthy *babu* could proudly declare that he had not seen his wife even more than once after marriage (Bandopadhyay (ed.), 1981: 164). Interestingly though, even if the woman's husband had abandoned her, she had to be very much faithful to her (Sarkar, 2000: 603). After the death of her husband, the wife was expected to live in solitude (Census of British India, 1883:85). Physical violence against wives was a common scenario. The year 1872 alone had recorded 205 native infant girls death due to marital violence (Sarkar, 2000: 611). For instance, the *Education Gazette* May 1873 had reported a shocking incident of a 'mature' husband of a girl of eleven who had dragged her out by the hair and beat her to death. Despite such a criminal offence, the accused person was let off with a light sentence (Education Gazette, 1873). Among British, though there was liberty for some women to choose grooms, they had almost same fate after marriage. Prior to the passing of the 1882 Married Property Act, when a woman got married, her wealth was usually passed to her husband. She was also expected to produce children. However, she had no legal rights over her own children (Anderson, 2011: 141). Again, if her husband decided to abandon her from inheriting his properties, the fate of a British wife became like other Hindu widows. In other words, they had to earn their living by doing either menial labour or begging (Vickery, 2003: 285). Moreover, they were not secured from violence too. Both upper class and lower class men used "*to strike their wives with pokers and similar weapons, throw them downstairs, beat them during pregnancy, enforce sexual intercourse after childbirth, and indulge in marital rape or enforced sodomy.*" (Hammerton, 1990: 276)

Adjustment was always women's burden. In native case, at a very early age the girl had to leave her house as a wife. Rassundari Devi portrayed in her autobiography *Amar Jiban,* how all of a sudden she was out of her affectionate maternal house and entered into a caged life after marriage (Devi, 1876: 67). From her writing we get a glimpse about how a young bride was expected to work relentlessly from morning to midnight. The feeling was more or less same for the British brides, sometimes much worse. As they mostly had to settle and adjust in an unknown land far from home and had no one to share her sufferings with. They either had to endure an abusive marriage or after separation, an abusive society where they were all alone. Some could not adjust at all and had

hysterics, suicidal attempts *etc* (MacMillan, 1988:137). Moreover, many of the British women of lower class British men were only dependent on their husbands, if their husbands died by some reason, they were completely helpless in this foreign land, many ended up in prostitution. Suresh Ghosh portrayed how a suffering British wife warned her friend who was planning to come to Kolkata to find groom, by terming the whole process "folly and impropriety" (Ghosh,1970:65). Another misery for British wives in Bengal was the lack of support, proper medical help and guidance during childbirth. They had no option to seek help from their dear ones and mainly absence of assistance from their mothers was very traumatic for them during childbirth and post-natal phase (Choudhury, 1988: 525).

Concluding Remarks

Though the two communities of East and West were very different in their purpose of life and basic habits, one habit was common- the desire to form a family. Marriage had been an integral part of colonial Bengal society and the fact that it was so diverse in colonial Bengal makes it more important. This paper attempts to bring these diverse marriage systems together to have a comparative analysis. It finds that, there have been two very important aspects of the entire marriage system in colonial Bengal- The upper hand of men in the marriage procedure in both native and British community and the lion's share of responsibility of woman to make the marriage work. Irrespective of their class and environment, it was the women who faced the hardships of marriages- physical and emotional abuses, lack of consent, adjustment issues *etc*. Apart from the individual gender based roles, studying the Colonial Bengal marriage system helped to understand how these ties also played crucial role politically and economically. In many cases both the natives and British opted for inter-racial marriages for political gain; one for higher connections among elites, others for sustaining as the ruling party. The economic impact of marriages was not less. Apart from the individual gains like dowry and bride-gift, a huge marriage market grew up with *ghatak*, marriage bureaus and astrology organizations centering the native marriages. On the other hand British weddings benefited the orphanages, churches which arranged balls and dances, wedding ceremonies. But amid all these, genuine affection and emotion played strong roles in many marriage alliances and that's why even in the rigidly knit British society, we found native wives and in native elite households, there were British wives who left her everything behind. Thus, marriage in colonial Bengal was not only a matter of two individuals, it portrays the diversity of colonial Bengal society; the homogeneity and rigidity of the communities and provides an insight of the social and personal lives of the individuals.

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Are women victims of patriarchal social system in the process of witch hunting? With reference to Assam, an analysis

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Abstract: Witch-hunting a social evil that has been prevalent in most of the traditional societies; it, is based on the superstitious belief hanging in a balance of myth and reality. The terms such as *witching, witch doctors, witch-mongers, black magic spell, witch-finder,* are some of the terms that is quite relevant in traditional societies.

When one analyze the different terms and connotations of witch/witchcraft one of the most important thing that comes out both in the traditional or modern societies, eastern or western societies, developed or underdeveloped, women has been in the center of it, the so called witch has always been picturised as someone with an odd ugly look, having dreadlocks, crooked long nails, dilapidated clothes, carrying a broomstick or a rod etc. has often been used as synonyms with women.

Assam is popularly known as the 'land of magic and sorcery'. The practice of witch hunting in Assam in general and BTAD in particular is associated with the traditional belief on the existence of evil and evil-spirits and the power to harness evil spirit to perpetrate harm upon others with the help of the spirits on the will of the witches.

Keywords: *Witchcraft, Witch Hunting, Crime, Women, Rights, Superstitions, Tradition, Patriarchal Society, BTAD and Assam.*

Introduction

"Violence against women is a manifestation of historically un-equal power relations between men and women, which has let to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of full advancement of women" (Tanujha, 2011: 248). Though women have equally contributed towards the development of each and every society they have always been at the bottom of the ladder of any kind of rights and privileges that we as humans enjoy. They have been at the receiving end of all kinds of atrocities and crimes. Women's contribution in the development is hardly being recognized, women are not regarded as equal partner in the developmental processes though they have contributed largely to the development of each and every societal aspects, be it social, cultural, economical or political. The most important fact is that women are considered inferior to men in most of the traditional societies and hence there is an under-valuation and under-estimation of the contribution of women in the society. Men in most of the traditional society in

India prefer women to remain within the four walls of the house, rather to say bound within the kitchen.

Crimes that especially target women, such as trafficking, rape, kidnapping, and abduction, dowry death, domestic violence, sexual harassment, molestation and other related crimes assault the human rights of women as each such offence deprives them of the security of life and limbs and the basic dignity as a member of the society. Amongst them the most heinous crimes are rape and dowry death. Rape cripples a woman mentally and hurts her physically beyond imagination of anyone. Dowry death arises out of the mentality that denies the women equal status and respect in her-own house (Gir, 2007: 334-335). Beyond this basic recorded documented and segregated crimes against women in a patriarchal social system terming and targeting women as Witch and subsequently Witch-hunting is one such crime that has been quite relevant in most of the societies. Women often are soft targets of witch-hunting but this crime has often been not recognized or recorded as crime against Women.

Terms Relating to Witch and Witch-hunting:

There are various terms related to the concept of witch and witch hunting. In analyzing those terms and words we can hint out that though men are also victims of it women are at the center of this practice of witch hunting which raises a question to be answered, *Are Women Victims of Patriarchal Social System in the Process of Witch Hunting?*

I) Western Terminologies:

- **Spell;** to use magic/black magic on someone,
- **Enchantress;** a women who practice magic,
- **Hag;** an ugly, slatternly, or evil-looking old women,
- **Hex;** to practice witchcraft,
- **Sorceress;** women who perform sorcery or practices magic upon others,
- **Witch ;** one who is credited with supernatural power, especially women,
- **Enchanter;** one who enchants, especially a woman who is a sorcerer,
- **Witch-Craft;** the practice of magic, especially black magic, the use of spell,
- **Witch-Hunting;** hunting or killing of the one who practices black magic.
- **Witch-Branding;** terming someone as witch especially women,

II) Local Terminologies:

- **Diani/Diana (Assamese / Bodo):** one with power to use evil power against others; (specially Women, local term)
- **Oja (Assamese / Bodo):** traditional medicinal doctor, with some supernatural power, (local term)
- **Naikangra (Bodo);** one who can foretell the future or can point out the one who has done witchcraft against other or someone, (local term)

- **Deodini (Bodo);** one who can call out gods and goddesses in religious rituals or can also prognosticate who has done witchcraft against someone or individuals, (local term, citing women)
- **Daayan (Hindi):** female witches, one who can do harm through supernatural means,
- **Chudail (Hindi/Urdu):** female witches, monsters or demonic revenant etc. one who can do harm through supernatural means resembling women,

When one analyzes the different terminologies and connotations of the witch/witchcraft one of the most important thing that comes out is that since ancient days itself both in the traditional or modern societies, eastern or western societies, developed or underdeveloped women has been at the receiving end of witchcraft and Witch hunting. The so called witch has always been picturised as someone with an odd ugly look, having dreadlocks, crooked long nails, dilapidated clothes, carrying a broomstick or a rod etc. has often been used as synonyms with women.

When one analyzes the local terminologies diana/diani it also has the feminine outlook to it. Even the word diana/dianiin itself is feminine in character, when one looks at na and ni (nani) is a feminine suffix. Deodini also refers to women who can call upon god and goddesses.

Brief History of Witchcraft and Witch-Hunting in Assam

In pursing the history of witchcraft and witch-hunting it's often difficult to locate the exact origin of the practice of witchcraft and witch-hunting and also in understanding of the gendering of witchcraft but it's very clear that over the years in the history of witches, sorcery, witch-craft, witch-hunting etc. women are either the scapegoat of this practice or it can be stated that women are victims of patriarchal social system. There are different forms and ways and means of adopting the practice of witchcraft and witch-hunting. In most of the traditions this practice of witchcraft and witch-hunting is connected with socio-cultural practices, where women become the victim.

The word Diani/Diana is the local form of the word Witch. It is stated that the word *Diani* has come from the word *dakini*. According to Philip Rowson, the original meaning of the word dakini can be traced in the Tantra. In the Tantrik Buddhism dakini which means the female personification of the stage of a stage of wisdom. A popular image of Hindu goddesses Kali is found to be associated with many other images, such as shiva her so called husband and dakini and yogini her two associates. Thus the word diani has its root in Indo-Aryan language (Nath, 232), leading us to the conclusion that the word Diani/Diana had its origin in foreign language rather than having a local origin.

Though witchcraft has been leveled as adopted by indigenous community of Assam from other communities by different scholars and social scientist in the field, with whom they have come in contact within the modern web of migration, but there are various folktales that suggests that this practice of witchcraft was somewhat deeply rooted and is quite clearly visible that it originated from within the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the indigenous communities in Assam. In relation to this there are ample evidences to corroborate it, for example Mayong (Mayang) a place in Assam under Morigaon district is often termed as the land of black magic, witchcraft or the occult believing in tantras and mantras or witch doctors for healing of any sickness, aliment or misfortune, locally known as bej/bez or oja. People do believe in mystical, supernatural, or magical

powers and to do away with any kind of misfortune, sickness, curse etc through the use of black-magic.

Again amongst one of the major tribal community of Assam, the Bodos, this practice of witchcraft and witch-hunting is intertwined with socio-cultural and religious belief as reflected in various folktales and short stories, where one finds that by calling the gods and goddesses they can either to do away with misfortune or pave a way for new fortune. The existence of superstitious beliefs amongst the Bodo people has been prevalent since time immemorial. Bodo people believed in Diana/Diani (Witch), who can help get rid of any kind of misfortune, illness or sickness and even can direct any sort of misfortune on the enemy. It is believed that Ojhas (Witch doctors/traditional healers) can take the help of gods and goddesses to execute this act of sorcery or to heal the ailments.

Witch-hunting has been one of the out-come of the practice of witchcraft whereas it is only men who can become a witch finder or good witch. Although women participate in socio-cultural and religious rituals a woman's role is negligible and accorded with a bleak role and hence they are targeted as witches and thereby hunted.

Feminist Perspective of Witch and Witch-Hunting a short analysis

Witch-hunting a social evil has been prevalent in most of the traditional societies; it is based on the superstitious belief hanging in a balance of myth and reality. The terms such as *witching, witch doctors, witch-mongers, black magic, spell, witch-finder,* are some of the terms that is quite relevant in both traditional and modern societies. There are different theories to it, feminist perspective believes that witch hunting is related with the assigning of gender role in the society as given by the patriarchal social system, and devaluation of the social role of women, where women are the immediate victims of this system.

- Why should we speak of the witch hunts again? 'Again', given that in the recent years feminist scholars have lifted the witch-hunt from the historical limbo to which it was confined and assigned it to a proper place in the history of women in modern Europe and the Americas (Federici, 2018: 11).
- Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Mary Daly, and Carolyn Merchant, among others, have shown how the witch hunt served to deprive women of their medical practices, forced them to submit to their patriarchal control of the nuclear family, and destroyed a holistic concept of nature that until the Renaissance set limits on exploitation on the female body (ibid: 11.).
- As we have seen, the recent witch-hunts have spared no one. However, as in the European witch-hunts, those most frequently and violently attacked have been older women. In Ghana, they have been so much at risk that "witches camps" have been created, where those accused live in exile, after being expelled from their villages, at times, moving there "voluntarily" when they are past the child-bearing age, or remain alone, and feel vulnerable to attacks. Older women were also the majority of the victims in the Gusii witch-hunts of 1992-1995. The men

murdered there were guilty of association with suspected witches or were killed in their stead, when the women could not be found or they tried to protect them. Women are the main victims in Congo, South Africa, Zambia, and Tanzania. Most are farmers, often living alone. But in urban areas, it is traders who are more commonly attacked, as men respond to the loss of economic security and masculine identity, by discrediting women they see or believe to be competing with them. Thus, in Northern Ghana female traders have been accused of gaining their wealth by turning souls into commodities. In Zambia, those at risk are independent women, "who frequently travel as entrepreneurs and smugglers along the national highways"(Federici, 2008:11).

- Who is a witch? It is necessary to define the concept of "witch". A person specially of female gender, maybe considered a witch who acquires supernatural power, is capable of performing black magic or sorcery, and of causing purported harm to human health. Terms such as daayan, tohni, chudail, et al, are used to brand women as witch. The term tohna is used for men witches in the forest state of Chattisgarh. The term witch is popularly used for women. It suggests that it is gender attribute and practices of witchcraft are seen from gender perspective as in majority of witch killings, victims are women. Whatever the different practice and understanding of the terms "witch" may be, it shares a universal commonality, and that it is attribution of supernatural powers to a person by others. An attribute of a person as a witch is nearly always negative, fearful and destructive (Iqbal, 2015:111).
- In *Witchcraft, Women and Society*, Levack (1992) uses two approaches to analyze the literature in pursuit of an answer to the question: Why are women popular targets during witch hunts? In his introductory section, Levack raises the critical point that witches in all contexts have traditionally been women. First, he assumes that women have typically participated in roles (as traditional healers, midwives, heretics, and cult leaders) in which they have been portrayed as powerful actors rather than as helpless scapegoats. These roles are in stark contrast to the evil role of the witch. Levack contends that by performing these powerful roles, women are rebelling against the traditional view that they are passive and powerless. However, in contrast to Levack's assumption, the literature on witch hunts is uncertain as to whether women really have typically performed these roles. The data that Levack cites contradict these assumptions and do not support the notion that most accused women in witch hunts have been women with social power (Chaudhuri, 2012: 1214).
- Levack's second approach emphasizes the belief that women, because they are considered to be morally weaker than men, are more susceptible to the advances of the devil and, therefore, practice witchcraft more frequently than men do. This is a popular approach among historians, and it has been reflected in a number of publications. A problem with this second approach is its sole focus on witch hunts that have taken place in Western Christian communities. It is difficult to use this approach to explain witch hunts that have taken place among indigenous populations that encompass nature-based or animistic native religious affiliations. The approach is inadequate because communities with such affiliations have a fundamentally different view of witches. Members of such communities do not perceive witches to be in a pact with the devil (ibid: 1214).

- Researchers have different opinions about the origin of witchcraft. Most of the scholars believe witch craft to be fertility religion or cult. To increase fertility of men and women of their community they tried to apply sorcery which led to witchcraft. Generally, these activities of witches were believed to be useful. Gradually they started to harm people out of envy, hate, selfishness, power and wrath (Anju's, 2011: 24).

From analyzing the above perspectives of the Witch and Witch-hunt about the origin of witches, witchcraft, and witch-hunt there after one can very well assign that women are soft target to this practices, in the process of witch hunting men symbolized the witch finder (the good witch) and woman was assigned with the negative side of the witch hunt, she was being termed as evil, women were presumed to be witches and were besieged and persecuted for being evil witch in masses. It can be stated that the system of witch hunting starting from Europe, America, Africa and Asia or to one of the most infamous witch-hunt in the history of witch-hunting the Salem, Witch-hunt of 1692-93 all do have a close link that witch hunting was somewhat related with the assignment of gender based role in the society. And with the growth of capitalist system and globalization the fear of losing one's control over property and fear of losing the socio-political and cultural power to women in modern society leveraged the continuation of witch-hunting and women were the scapegoat to this system powered by gender role under the clutches of Patriarchal Social System.
In Tanzania alone, it is calculated that more than five thousand women a year are murdered as witches, some machete to death, others buried or burned alive. In some countries, like Central African republic, the prisons are full of accused witches, and in 2016 more than a hundred were executed, burned at the stake by rebel soldiers, who followed the footsteps of sixteen century witch finders, have made a business of the accusations, using the threat of pending execution to force people to pay (Federici. 2018: 3).

Witch-Hunting in Assam an Analysis

Witch-hunting is grossly seen amongst the most of tribal and traditional societies, witchcraft and witch-hunting is grossly seen being practice amongst some of the following communities such as Bodo, Rabha, Tea-tribes, Santhalis, Rajbongshis, Misings, Deuri, Ahom etc. It is to be stated that in the wake of witch-hunting, though harm or violence have been perpetuated to both men and women, women are the marginalized group who have been deeply affected by the practice of witch-hunting, they are being hunted down and killed; politically, economically and socially they have been subjected to discrimination and exploitation through the ages. One side is that most of the women in our traditional societies are dependent here even if they are not hunted; the loss of their bread earner cripples them physically and mentally. The practice of witch hunting leads to gross violation of human rights, often the victim is murdered in cold blood to hide political murder, grab property, silly envy, and petty quarrel amongst the villagers or so. The unabated practice of witch-hunting without proper trial and lack of strict laws to curb this practice is a serious issue and a matter of concern.

- **Assam Assembly Debate on Witch Hunting (01/02/2019)**

In most recent report given by the Mrs. Pramila Rani Brahma (State Social Welfare Minister) on 01/02/2019 on question asked on by Congress MLA Durga Bhumij during question hour he stated that in the past 18 years 2001 – 2018 around 180 people were killed on doubt of practicing witchcraft. He wanted to know what action has been taken against the killers and if the families of the victims have been compensated. In relation to witch-hunting amongst the four districts of BTAD, have witnessed more incidents of witch-hunting in Assam, Kokrajhar witnessed the highest, followed by Chirang, Udalguri and Baksa.

- Between ***2001 and 2017, 193*** people have been branded as witch and killed, out of it ***114 women*** and ***79 men***, ***202*** cases have been registered during this period, stated Additional Director general of Police (CID) Anil Kumar Jha. (Source Police Report)

- ***Dr Natyabir Das*** of ***Mission Birubala***, an organization which has been in the forefront of Assam's anti-witch-hunt campaign since 2011, said that between 2001 and 2017, Kokrajhar recorded the highest number of witch-hunting-related deaths — 61 (18 male and 43 female).

Causes of Witch-Hunting an analysis, Are women an easy target?

1. ***Dr Natyabir Das*** State Coordinator of ***Mission Birubala,*** one of the NGO which is leading the fight against Witch-Hunting in Assam, asserts patriarchal dominance over family property is often the reason behind witch hunting. In such cases family members begin calling the woman a witch. Later on superstitious beliefs and rumors are spread among the villagers about the woman in connivance with witch doctors," (Acharyya, 2017)

He also adds that victims are thrown out of their homes, treated as outcasts by the villagers and even killed. "There are also instances where women are accused of sorcery after they deny men sex," Dr Das says. Many young widows go through this ordeal, when men they've rejected accuse them of being a witch. Adding that patriarchy plays a major part in branding of women as witches Dr Das says that even older women are not spared. "These wise women normally command respect from the women folk in village. But they get victimized, as they create a support system for the women folks during the time of pregnancy and illness, challenging the dominance of the male quacks in the village," he said. (Acharyya, 2017)

Many murders do not get recorded as cases of witch-hunting in government files, but going as per incidents reported in the press, the figures of cases related to witch-hunting are normally four times more than what has been recorded by the government machinery," he says.(Acharyya, 2017).

2. According to Niva Devi, District Resource Person, Goalpara District Implementation Unit, AMSS (Assam Mahila Samata Society), the women within these communities become vulnerable

owing to a lack of support system within the family or community; for not being economically self reliant; and for lack of information about better opportunities (Chakraborty & Borah, 2013: 22).

3. Thus whether in public or in family rituals, women are virtually excluded from participation in worship. While women do participate in many matters of ritual, including preparation of the materials for the various sacrifices, they have a definitely inferior position in this regard and are not supposed to show familiarity with the various spirits, bongas. "A female who professes intimate familiarity with the bongas is looked upon as a witch and persecuted" (Nathan et al. 1996). The Santhal myth goes on with believe that the Witches, among the Santhal, can only he women, men are witch finders and women as witch, which is deeply rooted in gender segregation of the society.

4. Often single women are being targeted as witches in order to settle personal scores, to grab property, land and also exert the superiority domination over women.

In analyzing the above basic comments on causes of witch hunting it is quite evident that women in Assam in general and BTAD in particular (Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri) are strategically being targeted as witches, they are branded as witches and subsequently they are hunted and either their bodies are chopped into pieces or even buried alive. Women are worst to suffer from the practices of witch-hunting in Assam. Though there are various causes such as i) Superstitious Believes, ii) Lack of Proper Education, iii) Proper and reachable Health Care Facilities in and around, iv) Economic Backwardness, v) Empowerment of Women, vi) Lack of political will etc to the cause of witch-hunting after analyzing various terminologies and causes and cases of witch hunting in all parts of the world it can be stated that patriarchal social system is one such institution that has advantageously made a ploy to hunt women as witch.

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Health care and Health practices among Tribes: A study on 'Yaws' Disease among Tribes in West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: Indian tribal communities are economically, socially, and culturally different from other communities. Their health care issues are different from others because of their remoteness, poor infrastructural facilities, inadequate health and educational opportunities, poor sanitation, traditions and customary practices and traditions. Indian central and state government initiated several welfare measures to improve the general welfare, including health, education, and sanitation among tribal communities. But majority of them are still following the traditional and indigenous health care practices. Home-based medication, native medicinal preparations, treatment from private unqualified health practitioners, and occasional visits to Primary Health Care (PHC) centers are the practices followed by the tribal communities. Hence the present paper focuses on the medical practices followed by the tribals to deal with an endemic disease called 'Yaws' in West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh.

K eywords: *Tribal, Health-Care, Indigenous, Endemic, Yaws.*

Introduction

Good Health is a prerequisite for mankind's holistic development as it stimulates the energy to work for the self and society, thus leading to national development. (WHO, 2017) stated that "The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." This states that every human being has an equal right to live and have access to health care services. The central principle of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) is to ensure that everyone has access to health care services and other basic amenities. Despite many developmental activities, constitutional provisions, welfare schemes, and programs, many tribal communities fail to access socio-economic and health care services.

Tribals- India

The Tribal groups in India are named as Adivasi, Vanyajathi, Vanavasi (Forest Dwellers), Pahari, Adimajati, Atavika or Girijan (Hill People) and Anuchit Jan Jati. However, Adivasi is a popular term used to address India's tribal population subjected to their indignity (Lal Suresh, 2003). The Indian tribes are heterogeneous. They are diversified based on their dialects and their social, cultural, and religious practices. The tribals prefer to live in the orbit of the forests and hilly areas by secluding themselves from the general public and thus are unable to access socio-economic and health care services. Schedule Five of the Indian constitution has recognised 645 groups of the

tribal population as 'Scheduled Tribes' (S.T.) in India. (Singh, 2020). India witnessed a steady increase in tribal population. The following table represents the decadal growth rate of tribals in India.

Table -1. The Population of Scheduled Tribes in India 1961-2011

Census Year	Population			Decadal Growth Rate		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1971	3,80,15,162	3,67,20,681	12,94,481	26.2	25.2	67.6
1981	5,16,28,638	4,84,27,604	32,01,034	35.8	31.9	147.3
1991	6,77,58,380	6,27,51,026	50,07,354	31.2	29.6	56.4
2001	8,43,26,978	7,73,39,335	69,87,643	24.5	23.2	39.5
2011	10,42,81,034	9,38,19,162	1,04,61,872	23.7	21.3	49.7

Source: Census data from 1971-2011:-

It is evident from the above table that India's tribal population comprises of nearly 39 million in 1971.This number has increased to more than 104 million in 2011 census which constitutes upto 8.6 per cent of the total Indian population with a decadal growth rate of 23.7.

Andhra Pradesh is segmented into 13 administrable districts, with a total population of about 49.5 million. The tribal population of the state is around 2.7 million, which constitutes 5.5 per cent of the total population of the state. The study area of West Godavari comprises a total population of 3.9 million of which the scheduled tribe population is around 1.33 lakhs and 3.5 per cent of the tribal population belong to the district population, especially those Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) such as Kondareddi, Koya, Gond, and others.

Review of Literature

India's tribal communities are highly vulnerable and prone to many diseases both epidemic and endemic due to their varied culture and livelihood activities. The studies of various authors like Balgir (2006), Lal, S, B. (2006), Srinivasan (1987), Bas, S (2007), Kar, R, K. & Gogoi, J. (1993), Rao, S, K. (1998), Anitha, C T. (2018) and Balgir (2004) have a standard projection about the vulnerability and misery behind the tribal issues along with poverty, illiteracy, ignorance about the diseases, hostile environment, poor sanitation, lack of safe drinking water, blind beliefs, and their dissatisfaction about the health care service providers. Tribals are prone to severe health care problems like Anemia, Diarrhea, Tuberculosis, Yaws, Malaria, and Jaundice. Deficiency of Iodine, Micro-nutrients, Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), infertility, AIDS, respiratory illnesses, gastrointestinal problems, and fevers are considered as severe issues found in tribals. Thus, the inadequate infrastructural facilities, extensive scale absenteeism, lack of

vaccination and proper medication are deemed as significant reasons for the poor healthcare of tribals.

History of Yaws Disease

Yaws is a chronic contagious disease that mainly occurs in warm, humid regions and poses a significant public health threat in the tropics. Yaws infection primarily affects the skin, bone, and cartilage and becomes visible with symptoms such as bumps on the skin of hand, foot, face, neck, and genital area. It is caused by a bacterium called Treponema Pertenue. Chronic Lesions on palms and soles may disable the affected person for extended periods making them dependent on others.

According to Mark Rose (1996), yaws had its origin in middle Pleistocene Africa 1.5 million years ago, i.e. A.D.850. Before the 1950s, WHO &UNICEF led a worldwide survey and made efforts to eradicate yaws in 46 countries. As a result, the spread of disease had come down by 95 percent. However in the 1970s, the eradication programmes in many countries were discontinued and as a result, the disease began to resurface, resulting in a World Health Assembly Resolution (WHA 31.58) in 1978. Since 1995 there have been renewed elimination efforts in some regions and countries, but there is no global coordination.

Yaws in India

The term Yaws is considered to be of Caribbean origin. In India, the Yaws disease was first reported by the communities living in the forested tribal pockets of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. The climatic conditions like warmth, humidity and the rainfall of at least 40 inches are considered favorable for the transmission of Yaws disease. The social factors like scanty clothing, poor personal cleanliness, overcrowding, inadequate housing, low standards of living, absence in the usage of soap are significant reasons leading to the spread of Yaws.

Yaws in West Godavari

The Yaws survey was conducted in Andhra Pradesh in the year 1999 by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD). During the survey, few cases of Yaws disease had been identified. However, after 1999 there was no systematic survey undertaken by the government. As a result, the disease started spreading in areas where the necessary facilities like housing, electricity, water, and other infrastructure facilities were deplorable. The local name given to the yaws disease in the study area was Koya Kurupu (Tribal wound) or Koya Rogam (Tribal disease), as most tribals were Koyas in the region.

Need for the Study

Very few studies were reported on tribals' health care and health practices in Andhra Pradesh, emphasizing West Godavari district. Therefore, the present research is focused on health issues in general and the Yaws disease in particular among tribals. Regarding the tribal areas of “West Godavari" district of Andhra Pradesh, Yaws disease is still prevalent in agency areas of Polavaram, Buttaya Gudem, and Jilugumalli Mandals.

Objectives

Given the tribal backwardness and their primitive traits, the objectives of the study have been framed in order to examine the socio-economic conditions of the tribals in the selected region of the

West Godavari District. Furthermore, this study is conducted to understand the availability of health care services in the vicinity in general and about the Yaws disease in particular; and to analyse the impact of Yaws disease on tribal Health and livelihood.

Methodology

The Study is qualitative in nature. Both primary and secondary data were used to analyse the collected field information. The primary data was collected by using an interview schedule with the closed and open ended questionnaire. The study has adopted snowballing and purposive sampling techniques for primary data collection. In addition, the study took up observation techniques and case study methods to get in-depth information from the disease hauliers. The secondary data was collected from the local Primary Health Centers (PHCs), books, reports, and other research studies and analysed with advanced Statistical Techniques.

Findings of the Study

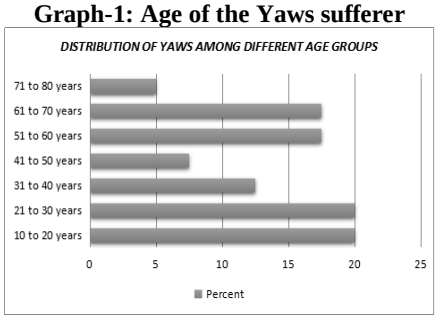
The primary study was conducted in the year 2015-16. The sample respondents were selected from Polavaram (later tribal rehabilitation took place due to Polavaram project issue), Buttaya Gudem, and Jilugumalli Mandals of West Godavari district. The Yaws infection was hardly found in Jeelugumali and Buttayagudem Mandals, as the two mandals were relatively better in terms of transportation, communication and available medical facilities. There were 40 Yaws infected person found in nineteen villages. In Bodigudem (1 person), Chegondapalli(3), Chidur(6), Gunjavaram(5), Itikelakota(4) Mamidigondi(1), Mutyalaraopeta(1) Patakunkala(1), Pidakulamamidi(1), Ramannapalem(2), Reddykunkala(1), Singanapalli(1), Tanalakunta(1), Tutigunta(2) Venkatareddy Gudem(6) Polavaram Mandal, Gunjavaram(1), Gogumilli(1) Buttaigudem mandal , Lankalapalli (1) Rowthugudem(1) and in Jeelugumalli Mandals .

Distribution of Tribals

The tribals who were infected with Yaws in the selected study area comprise of 32 (80 per cent) respondents from Koya community, Six (15percent) from Kodareddy, and only two (5percent) from the Goudu community during the field survey period. Geographically, most of these places come under hilly regions with challenging access to government and private healthcare facilities. The study revealed that yaw effected all group of people, irrespective of any age group

Age of the Yaws Sufferer

Graph-1: Age of the Yaws sufferer



Source: Primary Data during 2015-16

The bar diagram added below shows the age of Yaws sufferers in the study area.

The weak immune system and malnutrition among the younger age groups were the significant causes for their susceptibility to diseases. To justify this statement, eight respondents (20 percent) of 10-20 years age group were the disease hauliers. Similarly, eight (20 percent)from 21-30 years age group, five (12.5 percent) from 31-40 years age group, Three (7.5 percent)from 41-50 years age group, Fourteen (35 percent)persons from 51-70 age group years and Two (5 percent) persons from 71-80 years age group were affected by the Yaws disease. The field study reported the fact that Yaws infects irrespective of all the age groups. The severity may vary among the disease hauliers based on their approach to health care services.

Gender

The study also inquired about the gender of the disease haulers. It was reported in the field study that about 12 (30 percent) respondents were female and 28 (70 percent) respondents were male. Out of these, two girls and three boys were below 18 years of age. Interestingly, no women were found with the disease at 71 years and above the age group, whereas five men were identified with the Yaws disease between 71 and 80 years of age.

Literacy Rate

As per census 2011, the literacy rate in Scheduled Tribes (S.T.) was highest in Mizoram (91.7 per cent) and lowest in Andhra Pradesh (49.2 percent). The study also shows that 28 (70 percent) respondents were either illiterate or primary school dropouts who did not learn to read or write. The study found that about 8(20 percent) respondents studied up to higher secondary school, 2 of them failed in SSC, and two did not appear for board exams. Due to school vicinity problems and lack of transportation facilities and none of them studied beyond SSC.

Socio-economic conditions

Type of family and family size

The study revealed that about Thirty-Five (87.5 percent) respondents were nuclear, and five (12.5percent) were joint families out of 40 households.

Occupational details of the infected respondents

In enquiring the occupational aspect of respondents of the study, it is found that out of 40 respondents- 33 (82.5 percent) worked as manual labours. One person is a farmer, One person is running a small business (Kirana Shop), and the rest Five (12.5 percent) were not economically active due to the age factor.

Land

Out of the sample of 40 respondents, 17 (42.5 percent) people owned land with 1-3 acres, 4 (10 per cent) persons owned 4-5 acres, and one person (2.5 percent) from a joint family owned 10 acres. 18 (45per cent) of the respondents are landless. All these tribal families were entirely dependent upon shifting cultivation using Podu land. While trying to bring out the economic status, the study extended to analyze irrigated land details but no processes. About 19 (47.5 percent) people possess irrigated wetlands.

Housing and clothing

It is a crucial factor in addressing tribal health issues. The field study observations depicted that 28 (70 percent) respondents were allocated in government colony houses. This houses have become a

significant problem due to poor space and ventilation. This environment causes the transmission of diseases. The remaining 12 (30per cent) respondents live in their own (Kaccha) houses, which are in indigent condition. Another problem is the lack of adequate clothing, which is an operational agent for transmission of diseases. The study also observed that 20 (50 percent) respondents have no proper clothing to cover themselves from cold and heat. Another 20 (50 percent) respondents have clothing as per need. Factors like scanty clothing, poor personal cleanliness, overcrowding, and inadequate housing are the crucial reasons for the spread of Yaws.

Income

The tribal people find work between 6-8 months per year. During summer, they depend entirely on forest products. Almost 28 (70 percent) respondents of the study have a monthly income of around Rs.3000 only. Six (15 percent) respondents earn an income between Rs.3000-Rs.4000 only. One (2.5 percent) respondent from the joint family gets around Rs.7000-Rs.8000, and five (12.5 percent) respondents entirely depend on government incentives. Since the incomes are significantly lower, it becomes difficult for them to afford proper health care facilities.

Savings and Sources of Debt

All 40 respondents said they do not have any savings.

Debt burden: Tribals often depend on private local money lenders to meet their health, agricultural, and family needs. These money lenders are from nearby villages and owned shops. They have a deal with the tribals to sell away their agricultural produce to them for very cheap rates. Twenty-Two (55 percent) respondents have borrowed a loan of below one lakh from the moneylender for two per cent interest rate per month. Three (7.5 percent) respondents took a loan from the bank, three (7.5 percent) respondents from DWACRA, four (10 percent) respondents from ITDA, and two (5 percent) respondents from Self-Help Groups (SHG's) with a lower rate of interest prescribed by the respective agencies. All the loans were ranging from Rs.20, 000 to Rs 1,00,000 only. However, the study also found that six (15per cent) respondents have not taken any loan during field visits.

Ration Card

All the 40 sample households possess a white ration card given to people of the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category.

Productive and Non-Productive Assets

All respondents replied not owning any productive assets during field visits. Ten (25 percent) respondents do not possess any non-productive assets. However, the study observed that Television is the only non-productive asset in thirty (75 percent) respondents' families.

Respondents' historical background of the disease

Though Yaws is a contagious disease. The study proved that 28 (70 percent) people (out of the sample size 40) have no historical background of Yaws in their family. It is only through exposure to the Yaws contaminated areas that they got infected by it. Twelve respondents (30 percent) were infected by the disease from their family members. By analyzing the available data, the probable conclusion is that Yaws is not a hereditary disease. But due to the lifestyle and nature of the people the yaw disease runs deep among the tribal community.

Health care dependence

The study understood that 28 (70 percent) respondents relied on the traditional practices of health care methods or depends on the Rural Medical Practitioner (RMP) who regularly visits the villages. Though they are not qualified, they treat tribals without discrimination. Visiting a government hospital is their last resort. Twelve respondents (30 percent) of the sample never visited a government hospital except during health camps conducted by the Primary Health Centers (PHCs).

Medical Facilities

The eradication of Yaws remains a distant dream as the infected do not enjoy the privilege of proper health care or medical facilities in most cases. There are no good public health care services available in their vicinity as mentioned by 38 out of the 40 respondents.

The Distance to Reach Medical facilities

Distance also matters; for instance, the nearest available health centre is too far and difficult to access. For 22 respondents (55 percent), the nearest primary health centre is 3-10 Km away. Other 18 respondents (45 percent) health centre is at a distance ranging from 12-20 km. Since their economic status is deficient, they cannot afford the services of private hospitals in the city, so they are forced to visit public health care centres or private medical practitioners.

According to the PHC staff, they often visit the village, but it contrasts with the response given by the respondents. The PHCs serving an approximate population of 8,000 villagers struggle to attend to the ailing public's needs. The PHCs have just one doctor in charge. As per the details collected from the affected, the doctors do not prefer to stay in villages hence making them not available to cater to the villagers' urgent needs. Many villages lack approach roads, and if ever they do have one, it is most probable that the road is unpaved. Hence, to the Yaws affected people, long-distance journeys are an added misery and a new possibility of spreading the infection.

For Example, LND Peta PHC suffers from insufficient medical staff to cater 22 villages during field visits. Though the health centre has two efficient doctors, their services in the vicinity are scarce, and it has got just a single nurse for assistance, as inferred from the villagers' words. Serving 17,682 village folk's medical emergencies, the PHC seems to struggle to meet the requirements.

Another example is the Vinjaram PHC which lacks adequate medical facilities, medical amenities and staff to Cater the medical ailing of 12,383 villagers. Approximately, over the twenty villages are put under this health centre's care. The medical centre has a single doctor in charge, who is defying the medical rules of the country and stays in Dondapudi, which is 12 km away from the PHC. On an average rate, 20-30 people from every village seek medical aid every day. Due to varied reasons, these people confine to their indigenous practices of health care.

The Attitude of the Doctors/Staff with Yaws Infected People

Proper treatment at the appropriate time is one of the prerequisites for the eradication of the disease. Out of 40 respondents, only Three (7.5 percent) said both Doctors and medical staff are very concerned about the medical needs of the people. Though they provide medicines in most cases, in fifteen (37.5 percent) respondent’s view, the patient was suggested to buy medicines from outside

for specific diseases. This additional charge often led to an economic strain in poor tribal communities. Hence the respondents were forced to depend on indigenous medicine, Natu Vaidyam, and other local medical practitioners who never demand money immediately.

Approach Road

The study found that habitant regions of the tribal population in the West Godavari district are surrounded by hilly and forest regions; thereby, the road and transport facilities are not satisfactory. Almost all the respondents replied that the government bus services are limited to once a day. It becomes hardly possible for the diseased to travel to the city for better medical facilities or services.

People Awareness about the Disease

Yaws is a curable disease which can be treated by administering either an antibiotic of azithromycin or benzathine penicillin. The infected have no clue as to how they were getting affected.

Out of the 40 samples, 30 respondents (75 percent) do not have awareness about Yaws and its medication, but a few were aware of this Disease as Koya-Kurupu/koya rogam (disease). Consequently, ten respondents (25 percent) knew both the local name Koyakurupu and the medical term Yaws. They are aware of the medical facilities in PHCs, but due to lack of transport facilities and unavailability of Doctors in PHCs in the needy time, they were discouraged to go to hospitals. Later they started taking medicine from the local Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs), and their indigenous medicines. Hence, a proper awareness campaign among these people is deemed crucial.

CASE STUDY-1

My name is Chinna Srinivas, aged 25, belonging to the Konda Reddy tribe. I am a native of Polavaram Mandal of West Godavari district. As far as my family details are concerned, I belong to a nuclear family. I and my wife venkata reddamma, aged 21, are agricultural labourers. We neither own any land nor have leased any. The kutcha house that I currently reside is my property. Since our family income is meagre, it is a struggle to make both ends meet. A television is the only non-productive asset that that we have.

Though my village had approach roads, they are all unpaved. When any family member falls sick, it becomes hard to reach the nearest PHC which is situated almost 13Km away. Walking for the treatment for my disease has caused me enormous pain. By the time I reach the hospital situated 15km away from home bare foot or by other means of transport, the soreness and wounds of my legs start to inflict unbearable pain. But, it is more painful to see the unconcerned, carefree attitude of the doctor and staff. Many a time, I had to wait for hours to meet the doctor. They treat Yaws infected people like me with contempt. I am the only person who bears this disease in my family. Though I consume liquor regularly, I guess that is not the reason for my disease. We have got no orientation regarding the disease from a third person, but I think that I got infected from my mother and now my (girl) children of the age of five and are also suffering from the same disease. When I was a child, I saw my mother bear the pains of the disease now, and I am a witness for the same to my children. The disease I have is disgusting, but my family's care and concern for me provides me with enormous confidence. The doctor in charge at the PHC prescribed me a few tablets and asked me to adhere to clean habits. I take a bath with soap, but we do not have bathroom facilities at home. My family members and I take bath in an open place. We hardly receive any help from the government officials. A couple of weeks back, few government officers came along with some

other people and made speeches about our land, property and other related stuff. Apart from that occasion, they hardly paid us any visit. We hope the government will do the necessary action to help us at the earliest.

CASE STUDY-2

My name is Singanna Dora; I am 18 years old and belong to the Koya tribe. My village is where I have been staying as my birth comes under Polavaram mandal of West Godavari district. I am part of a nuclear family where all our family members are agricultural labourers. Like most of the homes in my neighborhood, mine is also like a kutcha house. My father built this house so we owned it. In my family my brother and sister have gone to school. We have a T.V. in our house but no bicycle, scooter or anything else. Television is the only non-productive asset in my family. We don't even have a proper bathroom so we take bath in the open. The wounds of the disease started coming to my body when I was a child. It started in my leg and slowly spread to the body. The wounds are really painful and I find it really disgusting as it obstructs my labour. My father and I we went to the nearest PHC, which is 6Km away, a few times. The doctor prescribed a few tablets which I am consuming daily. My family has got low income and hence it becomes really hard to meet the expenses when the doctors ask us to purchase costly medicines. They don't provide us any medicines. We have to buy them from outside. Per month our medical expenses exceed rupees 600 since the government doesn't provide us ration, medical expenses becomes added burden. I am the only one in my family line who has got this disease. Nobody told me how I got it. We hardly receive any orientation. A nurse from the PHC visits our village daily but she does not stay for much time. The wound is really painful during the winter. Most of the days we freeze due to severe cold as we do not have sufficient blankets at home. There are cracks in the roof of our house, so water comes in during the rainy season. The government hardly provides housing facilities. We do not have proper education so we don't know what to do. Hope a helping hand will be extended one or the other day.

CASE STUDY-3

I am M. Saraswathi, aged 29, belonging to Koya tribe group. My villages Boudygudem belong to Polavaram domain. Venkateshwarulu, my father, Kanamma, my mother, me and my brother are all agriculture laborers. We have a joint family system. I was in this village since my birth. I grew up here. My family owns almost 2 acres of land where we do cultivation. My father works really hard, so do my brothers. We have been able to earn a decent living. All of us stay together under the roof of a pucca house which is a rare scene in my neighborhood. Our non-productive assets include a radio and a T.V. through the hard work of my parents and brothers, my family is living a happy life except for the disgusting disease that has infected me. The doctors said to me that the name of the disease is Yaws. Initial wounds appeared on my legs right when I was in my childhood. My parents took me to the nearest PHC which is 2Km away where the doctors prescribed some medicines and asked us to purchase them. I consumed those medicines for over three months but saw no signs of recovery. Pus kept following out of my wounds and the pain was terrible. The PHC nurse gave pain killers which gave a momentary relief. Finally we were forced to consult a private doctor. He prescribed some new medicines which upon consuming which brought in drastic change to my

condition. The wounds started healing and pus stopped but the mark of the wounds is still in my body. I have a feeling that the wound is not completely healed under the top skin, it is still raw. My family members are very much concerned about my problem. The PHC staff visits us once in three days in a week and I go for regular checkup. We do not find any government officials coming to our village. We need some health awareness campaigns by the government health department.

CASE STUDY-4

I am Madakam. Lakshmi, aged 33, belonging to the Koya tribal group. My village is Mamidigondi which comes under the Polavaram Mandal of West Godavari district. Ours is a nuclear family who has been natives of this land since birth. The main occupation of my family members is physical labour. My economic status is really poor as we have no land of our own, other than a mere 75cents which has been leased. The kutcha house that we stay in is our only asset. We don't have the comfort of owning any non-productive assets like bicycle, scooter or radio. The general condition of my village is not so good. We don't have approach roads. Public transport buses can be spotted once in a blue moon. In my village most of the houses are kutcha houses. The Health conditions of our villagers are pathetic. We don't have a PHC in our village. The nearest one is 5km away from the village. The PHC staff visit the village once in a week and we get to see the doctor once in a month. As far as my disease is concerned, I was infected right when I was a kid. I have been taking medicines since then. My parents took me to the government doctor but the tablets he prescribed to stop the disease only for short while after which it came back with more severity. The wounds deepened, pus formulation started increasing, and the pain was unbearable. The disease had crippling effect on me and I found it hard to face the public. Had there not been my parents support, I would have committed suicide by now; the PHC people were not a concerned with the state of disease in the slightest. They treated me with contempt. The staff asked my father to buy medicine from outside which was an added misery to the poor economic condition of my family. We are forced to spend around rupees 500 on medical needs every month. We receive no help from the government. After 6 months of treatment in the government hospitals, we saw no improvement. So we consulted a private doctor. Though it is really unaffordable for my family, we are left with no other option.

CASE STUDY-5

My name is Sankuraiah, I am 58 years old and belong to Koya tribe. Polavaram is the name of the Mandal, under which comes my state of domicile. Ours is a nuclear family of three members and we have been brought up in the very same land in which we live currently. We do labour work for a living. We live in a Kutch house, so do most of the people in our village. Our house is our only asset. We can't afford to buy a T.V, Radio or any such assets as we struggle every day to make both ends meet. My wife passed away a couple of years back and that has made the burden of the family fall on my shoulders. I find it hard to support my children's needs with the little money that I earn. I was forced to take loan of rupees 24,000 from a money lender at an interest rate of 25 paisa per day. I took the loan to construct a house. We don't have any savings and I am finding it difficult to pay the interest. The disease I have is an added burden as it obstructs my work. The initial stage of the disease was during my childhood. My father took me to a doctor. When I started taking medicines

regularly, the wound healed after a while. After I got married and settled up with kids, I totally forgot about the disease. After my wife's sudden demise things started becoming worse. I had none to support me. Working in dusty surfaces brought in itching around the wound and pus formation with terrible pain. Considering my economic conditions I don't think I can afford to consult any private doctors. The PHC staff and doctor are concerned and are duty minded are providing me with medicines but it seems of no avail. I have no clue as to what has to be done.

Conclusion

Tribal health problems and their beliefs towards the traditional healthcare system have become a matter of grave concern as it reflects on their socio-economic conditions and cultural practices. Despite various government developmental initiatives through programmes and schemes, systematic policy interventions and approaches are to be administered at all levels. Managerial training to the medical staff, effective maintenance of infrastructure, regular monitoring of the infected, and availability of feasible vaccination facilities can help reduce chronic diseases among the tribals. Maintaining interpersonal relationships and creating opportunities for financial empowerment of the tribals are considered essential for dealing with the tribal health care issues.

Yaw disease is a concern for the marginalized group and section of society. Their poor living condition, lifestyle, socio-economic and cultural backwardness needs to be ponder upon. Yaw disease affects all age group and it is not hereditary. Proper support and care from government can uplift their conditions. Case studies have also revealed that the tribal groups who suffer from yaw disease lack basic necessity of not having adequate house, bathing and health care. Facilitating the tribal group with awareness to healthcare without any prejudice can uplift their conditions. Society will only developed when all sections of community are included and heath right as basic human right will thus be justified.

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The relevance of dietetics in Gandhian philosophy: Mapping the trajectories of his experiments

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Abstract: This article argues for analytics of dietary habits of Mahatma Gandhi through an argument around his practices and manner of articulation on discourses on food; his experimentation around dietetics and its relation to political goals in the light of colonial governmentality. Gandhi's dietetics practice intervened with the construction of Oriental as the 'others', showing that the subject (Indian) domain constituted the hegemonic order of colonial reign by presenting the superiority inherent in the colonial culture. In this regard, this article describes the emergence of Gandhi's alternative dietary habits, with analyses of discourses on scientific treatment of food as a part of daily livelihood, while understanding and arguing for the importance of dietetics as an integral part of the political world of modernity. It concludes that the broader contours of Gandhian philosophy and its introduction in Indian society through nationalist politics are uniformly appended with the formulation of his experimentation, not only with his philosophical and political goals but also with his daily practices dietetics constitute an essential part. Throughout, there is an attempt to present the symbolic and discursive construction of dietetics and experimentations to negotiate the individual's character.

Keywords: *dietetics, experiments, Gandhi, Ahimsa, vegetarian*

Introduction

The broad contours of Mohandas Gandhi's (hereafter Gandhi)[i]philosophiesare connected with his everyday life practices, dietetics being a prime component. His ideas of diet and food habits were not hermetically modelled but represented a collective action to achieve truth and brahmacharya in his personal space and attain Swaraj in the public space. According to Gandhi, these words were significant from an administrative or political point of view and constituted an integral part of life, encompassing every sphere, including morality, truth in action and deeds, sexuality, economic improvement, and women empowerment. Gandhi's dietary debates went through various discursive shifts throughout his life, just as his politics and philosophy evolved into new dimensions. Critically probing and expanding the original frameworks of Gandhian ideas facilitates expanding the conceptual space of Gandhian practices regarding dietetics.

To understand the discourses on Gandhian dietetics, one must begin with his practices' distinct, transparent world. The vastness of the literature on Gandhian philosophy points to the manifold nature of Gandhian practices and concepts implicit in these practices, in their clear and often

distinct logic and more conceptually detailed renderings. Popularly known as the spiritual theory of 'Truth' offered by Gandhi, this forms the starting point for any critical exploration. As illustrated in this article, the Gandhian practices and their openness to a consistent political understanding underscore dietetics and other essential parts of his life. All social practices of Gandhi, whether based on ritual norms reinforcing hierarchical relations; transactional strategies arranged around a central and dominant philosophy; moral practices and disciplinary power fabricating subjects or practical life-relations and economics, are all discursive components. Constituted symbolically, they determine the subject positions and construct an agent as the locus point for many a discourse within an overall expansive formation/framework. The idea of dietetics is situated at the intersection of this manifold—sometimes reinforcing, at other times antagonistic—set of debates on a philosophical level that is intrinsically embedded within his political relations.

Dietetics formed an essential chapter in Gandhi's life, which in many ways, along with his politics, was bound by the norms of spirituality, doing his experiments with diet, no exceptions. Gandhi believed that to evolve spiritually and attain the universal truth, andone must be mindful of eating. Some scholars (Slate, 2019) felt that he failed to use his diet idea or precise his dietary experiments to bring Swaraj to every Indian. In this context, it is worth remembering that Gandhi never imposed his food ideas publicly, except for disciples in his ashrams, but kept the experiment with himself. His ideas of diets and food habits were not exclusive domains of his life but an intrinsic part of the collective action that he set to achieve personally (truth) and publicly (Swaraj) as a form of moral, philosophical and political guidance. He maintained that food is the vital cog in the wheel for one who cannot escape the clutches of the physicians due to his inability to control the senses of the tongue, in turn, becomes "the slave of his body instead of remaining its master, loses self-control, and ceases to be a man." (Gandhi, 2012: 249)

This article identifies the thought processes and reasons for his experimentation with ideas regarding food and dietary habits. It is pertinent because "the kinds of questions Gandhi asked nearly eight decades ago are the ones which now face both the underdeveloped and the post-industrial societies caught up in a deep upsurge of confusion and disillusionment." (Sethi 1979: 3) These questions can be answered if the underlying thoughts and practices of Gandhi's daily life are identified and scrutinised to understand the evils of our times.

Hence, control over food habits, which Gandhi referred to as 'control over palate', constitutes a crucial aspect among all the sensory organs. Without it, the order of internalisation, thereby achieving the most significant objective, cannot be realised as the question of choosing one's diet was inexorably tied with an individual's political belief. The article first discusses his dietary and food habits to understand the relationship between diet and belief systems. It then seeks to understand the experimentations of Gandhi's dietary habits as the basis of his own philosophical and political ideas. Finally, the analysis seeks to identify how the components mentioned above are intricately linked to form a suitable body of knowledge in Gandhian dietetics, which is still relevant in this ruthless and competitive global scenario of human existence.

Dietetics as the Core Idea of Gandhian Philosophy

Ahimsa[ii] remains one of the essential edifices of Gandhi's philosophy and politics. However, many may argue that he missed the critical character of enquiry, human control over the natural world,

andfeasibility and capability in the real world. This critical posture would imply "an absence of a particular'spiritual dimension' in the practical world that Gandhi seems to have missed." (Parekh, 1997: 35) However, Gandhi's focus was on the entirety of applying his philosophical and moral objectives and not its limited political application. His denunciation of violence centred on bodily and mental stimulation ashis refusal of violence obtained, and primarily began, from its control over sensory organs. It is the truth (in his words *Satya*) that Gandhi considered the ultimate destiny of man's life, which can be achieved through *Ahimsa*, *Satyagraha*.[iii]

Like *ahimsa*, much of his philosophy pivoted around the cardinal belief that rituals in our daily lives help achieve the highest body of knowledge, i.e.,truth. Those daily and simple rituals are the steppingstones to access the objectivity of truth. All these are interrelated and produce the Gandhian thought process or belief system, where each one is complementary to the other and interconnected. One cannot and must not try to compartmentalise and segregate the thought process for individual internalisation because one cannot achieve the highest form of realisation of one's life by treating them as distinct and exclusive. Gandhi himself stated that "*Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them." (Tikedar, 1971: 5) The realisation of truth, which is the realisation of oneness with all that is created as an extension of oneself, portrays *ahimsa*, whereas *ahimsa*, when adopted to realise the absolute truth, becomes an effective spiritual practice. This spiritual practice can be possible only when one situates one's life with the daily rituals of livelihood. Hence, to practise *ahimsa*, one does not need to be a *rishi* (saint). Gandhi (1920) said that *ahimsa* is meant for ordinary people as well. Hence, the corollary relation among his ideas can be established in ascending order as follows: practice/experimentation of daily rituals in private spacepractice/experimentation of philosophical and political ideas, like, *Ahimsa*, *Satyagraha*; achieving *Satya* (truth) as the final destination and all these domains are interrelated and enmeshed. The objective of achieving truth is not possible unless one celebrates the other two practices and experimentations. Gandhi's philosophical and political practices, however, are widely discussed or dissected areas. For instance, as Banerjee (2020: 90) notes, "Gandhi came to the conclusion that while the end is satya, ahimsa is the means; while duty is satya, rights belong to ahimsa; while give is satya, take is ahimsa." Similarly, by inquiring into his daily livelihood rituals, we have chosen to situate ourselves concerning dietetics and enter into a dialogue with Gandhi, often regarded as 'irrelevant' by academia and seen only as a concern of the modern world.

The narrative of food consumption began with Gandhi's concern for his bodily activity and the people who surrounded him. With the initiation of public activity, he became aware of the people's well-being and considered it his responsibility. As a critique of modern western civilisation, he did not believe in medicinal treatment or drugs to cure physiological ailments. He even preferred to view the term 'disease' as *dis-ease* or an individual whose physical or mental state of affair is not at *ease* or comfort, where *dis* implies negation. Gandhi often referred to naturopathy as a hobby, preferring that over allopathy or other medics like *vaidyas* or *hakims*arguing that nature should be able to rectify any disease caused by breaking the law of nature.[iv] He was mostly convinced that disease is a rupture in the body system, part of nature. Hence to maintain or help nature overcome this break in the system, we must have a proper diet (Gandhi, 1949: 2).

Throughout his life, Gandhi's dietary debates went through various discursive shifts. What remains unswerving throughout, though, is the existence of an element of resistance to modern civilisation,

which he thinks is inimical to all our pain and sorrows (the idea he cultivated through the constant questioning of his presuppositions), for which he focused his dietetic thoughts or experiments into three most important monographs (Gandhi, 1948; 1949; 1959) and several other references in his autobiography (Gandhi, 1927). Nevertheless, the monographs primarily dealt with the nutritional and hygienic aspects of the diet, whereas the autobiography concentrated upon his regular experimentations to reach certain political goal/s. For instance, "having thus set forth their object and the train of ideas which led up to them. I now propose to describe the dietetic experiments at some length." (Gandhi, 1927: 295-6)

His diet analyses experienced a wide range of stages, particularly during his time as a practitioner and student of law in London and when he changed from being an advocate of eating meat to an active campaigner for vegetarianism. His experiments were not limited to food items alone but also involved the equipment or utensils used for cooking. For instance, in Chapters 3 to 7 of *Young India*,[v] he prescribed the oven, vessels for cooking, and even the amount of water to be used for cooking. In brief, and in the true sense, a complete procedure of his dietetics involved producing the food, the nutritional value of the raw or finished food item, and the meagre resources of the production, which aided in producing the food. Hence, we concentrate on all his publications mentioned above to understand the long-term trajectory of Gandhi's broader discourse of nationalism and social reform through dietetics.

Gandhi shunned milk for six years of his life on ethical grounds arguing that milk was as much a non-vegetarian product as an egg, arguing that a man was entitled only to his mother's milk, and expressed an urgent need to find a scientific alternative to milk and meat from vegetarian sources. Perhaps Gandhi failed to realise (or write about it) that the milk industry had unpalatable consequences regarding beef being an unwanted by-product. However, Gandhi (1957) did outline his food preferences, the logic behind such choices, and his scientific analysis of such choices. According to him, food taste was acquired, not something we are born with. Hence, it is debatable whether Gandhi could easily be called a modern-day vegan, keeping the hierarchies and differentiation among different types of vegans, like health vegans or ethical vegans (Greenebaum, 2012).

Dietetic Experiments in Early Stages of Gandhi's Life

Although born in a strict vegetarianGujarati Baniya[vi] family, Gandhi was not averse to non-vegetarian food during his college days in Rajkot, then amid a wave of reforms where meat-eating was regarded as a symbol of progress. A friend of Gandhi's brother, Sheikh Mehtab, prodded him into eating meat. Forwarding a logic where meat-eating was synonymous with being strong and weakness in physique was related to vegetarianism. Even in contemporary studies (Lax & Angela 2020; Rothgerber, 2013; Ruby & Heine, 2011), masculinity and modernity are connected with consuming meat or being non-vegans. In his earlier days, Gandhi began believing that if the whole country took to meat-eating, the British colonial rule could be trounced. It is often said that we are what we eat. Gandhidenied and transgressed his caste affiliation in consuming meat and indirectly went a step forward acquiring a pan-Indian identity—a new self-identity necessary for being a national leader. However, this previously held point of view changed when he was confronted with

contrary evidence (both in London and South Africa) about dietetics and this willingness to change emphatically set Gandhi apart from other politicians of his time.

Gandhi's views on vegetarianism took a concrete shape in his writings in the journal *The Vegetarian*. To strengthen the cause of vegetarianism, Gandhi gave the example of Indian shepherds who were as strong as a meat-eating European. Gandhi wrote: 'An Indian shepherd is a firmly built man of Herculean constitution' (CWMG Vol.1: 24). In another article, he reflected on the effects of colonial rule on the Indian diet (CWMG Vol.1:22). He pointed out that killing a 'life-to be' was unethical as killing an animal for food, hinting at eggs and milk. While interacting with the vegetarian community of England, Gandhi coined the term 'Other West', and for him, peaceful coexistence was possible between the East and the Other West. Gandhi's experimentation in forms of practices for vegetarianism honed his leadership skill in later days.

During Gandhi's voyage to London to study law, he vowed to his mother to refrainfrom three objects (sex, wine and meat) in England. Even in his long journey on the ship, Gandhi shunned non-vegetarian food, keeping his mother's wishes. In London, Gandhi's ideas went for a toss as he delineated the concept of masculinity from the practice of meat-eating by constantly engaging with his colleagues and critics (consider in this regard Gandhi's view on race, caste, and gender, which changed in due course of time). In his way, Gandhi challenged the colonial formulation of tradition and modernity and returned to his cultural moorings in dietary habits. Discovering a new sense of self, Gandhi sought to use vegetarianism to symbolise resistance against the West and everything associated with it.

From a believer[vii]in eating meat to overthrowing the colonial rule, Gandhi's experiment with dietetics started with an active campaign for vegetarianism associated with the London Vegetarian Society[viii].He elaborated on how Henry Salt's book *Plea for Vegetarianism*, Howard William's *The Ethics of Diet* and Dr Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet* had motivated him to begin his experiments in dietetics, which ultimately moved to religion). Thesociety and later the club he founded for vegan development demonstrated more extensive difficulties to an assortment of normative social practices he followed later. Brown (1996: 2) indicated that Gandhi's work as a member of the society inculcated a combined diet, health, and religious approach that remained forever with him. He had recognised the influence of this formative period of his life in England as the most crucial part and would remain 'indebted to the West' (Gandhi, 1955: 2) for changing the course of his dietary philosophy. His active involvement remained mainly at the Central Restaurant of London for proper vegetarian meals regularly, owing to his vow to his mother whileatLondon, while practising and studying as a student of law and accumulating ideas of the British cultural identity[ix]. He was so involved with the approach that he started preaching the ideas from door-to-door of the British Society in London and other members of the society.

At the Central Restaurant, Gandhi laid his handon Henry Salt's book, *Plea for Vegetarianism* (1886), whichhad a lifelong impact on Gandhi's philosophy of taste and food. After reading it, Gandhi became a vegetarian by choice and not merely one bound by customs and traditions.He was embracingthe principles of renunciation, self-control and spiritual evolution embedded in such voluntary choice. Salt (1886) advocated vegetarianism for its economic, scientific, moral, aesthetic, physical and utilitarian perspectives and forwarded examples of great writers like P. B. Shelly and Bernard Shaw, who were complete vegetarians. He believed vegetarianism was the future of the

world. In London, Gandhi shared a room with Josiah Oldfield, who studied to be a doctor and was an active member of the London Vegetarian Society. Oldfield edited the journal of society and wrote on diet and politics. Gandhi and Oldfield served lentil soup, boiled rice and large raisins for friends coming over to their home. In brief, Gandhi spread vegetarianism in his battle, arguing for a steadfast moral commitment to the cause, subscribing to the journal, and becoming an Executive Committee member of the society. He regularly wrote for the journal and travelled to hold public meetings and gatherings for the cause. In a sense, these were Gandhi's first lessons in public speaking, writing and organising a public forum, discovering yet again a new self, which could work for a public cause.

Cultural and counter-cultural axioms exist in such a narrative, which many tried to view as constructing a latent form of anti-thesis to that of the present hegemonic thesis of English cultural Society (May, 1972: 112). His anti-thesis existed in the dietetics only, to which many critics argued that his embracing of partial markers (dietetics) ignoring the others (language, dress codes, attitudinal preferences). It seemed inconsistent when he became a vocal critic against the class of Indian National Congress (INC) members who remained within the trope of modern British cultural identities while representing the poor and marginalised Indian subjects[x]. Nonetheless, refusing to eat meat in the British cultural space was a form of resistance and a mark of social action, culminating in his long political sojourn in India. This experiment acted as a practice board to prepare his social activities in public spaces. While for Gandhi, South Africa remained an arena to practise his political activity in public spaces, dietetics became a space for individual experimentation.

At Tolstoy Farm in South Africa, Gandhi mostly consumed raw food and advised the residents to produceitthemselves, encouraging untreated vegetables and fruits. Gandhi's preference for cereals, exceptionally unpolished wheat, with fibres providing roughage, adhere to modern-day nutrition fundamentals of anything polished detrimental to gut health. With all enthusiasm for seasonal fruits, Gandhi mentioned an ideal breakfast comprising fruit and milk. He also highlighted the importance of natural sugar present in fruits.

Later in life, he would go for several days without preparing his food. During the summer of 1893, Gandhi consumed raw food for 11 days at a stretch, about which he maintained a food diary that remarkably recorded everything he consumed and felt essential to keep the body alive and moving[xi].Gandhi's affinity towards raw food had several reasons, which he often explained. Apart from simplicity, cleanliness, and nutritional value, raw food had immense importance to cleanse the body of its impurities. In this assertion, Gandhi challenged the assumptions of Strauss (cited in Counihan&Esterik, 2013) that cooked food was akin to culture and raw was in opposition to civilisation. To Gandhi, however, raw food was liberating at various planes, economic as well as social. He believed money and time saved from cooking would open up a path for a better life for the poor.[xii] Slate (2019) identified that Gandhi was one rare species of activist who tried to liberate every Indian.Gandhi opposed a system in which women were forced to cook and underlined that a kitchen should be a place for joyful creation and partly aimed to enable women to be free from the kitchen.

Gandhi's South African experience marked the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of his philosophy of dietetics. During his 21 year-long stays, Gandhi became a political activist, pursuing

his altruistic activism for vegetarianism unabated. In letters to Indian students in England, he advised them to join *The Vegetarian Society* in London. In his 'London Diary', Gandhiwrote about dieteticsto guide Indian students to England for higher studies; he devoted 20 out of 55 pages motivating the students to remain vegetarian.

Another instance of his dietetics activism reinforcing his philosophic activism became evident when he sought to eliminate milk from his daily diet, to which Henry Kallenbach was a vital companion and advisor. Upon Kallenbach's advice, he abjured milk and "decided to live on a pure fruit diet." (Gandhi, 1927: 302) Food preparation was wholly done away with raw groundnuts, bananas, dates, lemons, and olive oil comprised of his regular diet. This systematic approach to the diet is closely connected to his philosophy of *brahmacharya* due to his cardinal principle regarding food as a vital component shaping human cognisance. Roy (2002) identified that his early experiments not only portrayed a construction of the self, different from the western dietary trends and culture, but also as a part of his practice of *brahmacharya* by controlling the palate and forming a pure body analogous to the Indian philosophic principles of having a clean, pure and *sattvic* body. Thus, his practices and ways of thinking did not disengage from *Satyagraha* and his political philosophies, but they were naturally associated. At one point, he discussed what he called 'domestic satyagraha' (Gandhi, 1925: 249). After his first jail experience in 1908, there came an occasion that compelled him to give up salt altogether, which he continued to follow for ten years. It so happened that his wife, Kasturba, had begun haemorrhaging after a brief respite following an operation. Since all remedies had failed, Gandhi tried to convince her to give up salt and pulses. Kasturba would disagree and instead challenged Gandhi himself to give up these items. A determined Gandhi announced that he would give up the items for one year, whether Kasturba followed his advice or not. Hearing this, Kasturba readily agreed to abstain from these articles and quickly got betterafter that. Many such narratives in his daily rituals became a part of the thesis we are trying to develop here.

Experiments after Arrival in India

Back in India, fasting became a common form of protest for Gandhi. He did public fasting more than a dozen times, the longest covering 21 days. Fasting, an extension of vegetarianism, a practice of self-control and renunciation of pleasure, involved renunciation and self-control. Vegetarianism, like *ahimsa*, was a voluntary weapon of struggle since one had to actively and affirmatively choose to follow his choice. Gandhi's vegetarianism started him on the road to *ahimsa*, as to him, there was inherent violence in eating meat and a nascent non-violence in abjuring it.

Gandhi, who believed strongly in a milk-free and salt-free diet, changed his course of action for social and purposive actions. He persistently avoided salt in his food, as he thought the natural ingredients of his early dietetics (around 1911) had enough salt substitute. In a letter to a friend[xiii], he wrote:

"Doctor friends have always told me that I should not go without salt. I thought it was better that the skin should be a little rough, in case I had to go to France or Mesopotamia, and with this idea I started taking salt. This brought on diarrhoea. I should have taken this as a warning that I should stop eating, but I fasted only partially. The result was acute dysentery. In this disease, food is like poison; despite that, I continued to eat. Thus, I have had to pay for my lack of self-control."

Around late 1920, after several suggestions and explanations from his doctors, he reluctantly welcomed 30 gm of salt in his diet. "After understanding the importance of salt—particularly for those working in the fields—Gandhi went on to protest Britain's hefty tax that made salt virtually unattainable for poor people in India", which is regarded as the crucial turn in Indian colonial resistance and also his disobedience of colonial authority[xiv]. This incident came to be known as the Salt March in 1930, one of the landmark events in India's national movement, accompanied by 60,000 *satyagrahis*. Similarly, he also started consuming goatmilk after a terrible bout of dysentery in 1917. On another instance, during a religious festival at his ashram, Gandhi overindulged in eating and within an hour came down with acute dysentery:

"all a-tremble, I broke the fast and brought great trouble on myself. Nor did I exercise self-restraint in deciding what to eat; I ate *ghens* [a semi-liquid rice preparation]. If I had taken vegetable soup only, the painful result would certainly not have followed. Today I am too weak to get up or walk. I have almost to crawl to reach the lavatory and I have such griping pain there that I feel like screaming. ... I am sure my pain will subside at a quarter to six. If I committed an error in eating, it is no excessive punishment to suffer for 24 hours. And the punishment will be so short because I have fasted today. Don't worry on my account. I believe by tomorrow I shall be completely free from the pain at any rate. If I am not careless in diet, I shall be my normal self in three or four days." (Gandhi to Fulchand Shah, 12 August 1918)

These two incidents depicted that all his experiments in dietetics directed towards moral and political actions could be suitably amended or altered if those 'mean' could justify the 'end'. The basis of Gandhi's moral actions rests on his recognitionthat health is not the monopoly of vegetarians. Many non-vegetarians keep good health, while on the other hand, many vegetarians opt for vegetarianism to resolve all fundamental problems, but their extreme fetish of cheese, lentils and haricot beans also have a profound negative effect on their health. It should also be noted that most vegetarians were compelled to adopt vegan food habits because of disease or any other health-related aspect, and they are most likely to revert to non-vegetarianism. Gandhi believed that the cause of diseases could be excessive eating, too frequent meals, and over-indulgence of concentrated starch and sugar. He suggested "avoiding sweets as much as possible and consuming *Gur* (jaggery) in small quantities and even disliked polishing rice or refining wheat flour. Irrespective of the nature of the diet, Gandhi added that it is the palate's control, which is most important. Thus, to keep healthy, no matter what you eat, it is necessary to cut down on the quantity of food and reduce the number of meals." (Gandhi, 1949: 14)

As Gandhi's philosophy of *Swaraj*, or self-rule, began to gain an ever more sophisticated definition, he became increasingly disinterested in the question of physical strength. Mental fortitude was paramount in his schema of things, harnessed by discipline, prayer, and compassion. Food was one such vehicle to achieve the desired objective—it was a supplier of nutrients rather than a sourceof flavour, tastes and pleasure.For years, his body has endured such discipline. During his political campaigns from 1913 to 1948, he walked several kilometres. Yet, he struggled with several health issues like pleurisy (1914), malaria (1925, 1936 and 1944), gastric flu (1939) and influenza (1945). He was operated on for piles (1919) and severe appendicitis (1924) (Bhargava & Kant 2019).However, he was back on his feet every time, primarily due to his disciplined lifestyle, focusing on physical fitness and a balanced diet. In a series of letters, he wrote that he deserved

the retribution of the illness because of his excessive intake of delicious food during his illness. At this time, he was on a limited fast, which continued even while he had minor symptoms. In a letter to the eminent chemist P. C. Ray, Gandhi explained his dietary problems:

"You may have heard of my illness. It was a severe attack of dysentery. Though I seem to be convalescent, I am utterly prostrate with weakness. I can scarcely move out of my bed or even sit in it for any length of time. The great question is how to build up this broken-up body. I have abstained from milk and its products for several years and vowed to do so for life. I, therefore, need a substitute for milk and butter. Hitherto in my strength, I have found an excellent substitute in groundnuts, walnuts and such other nuts, but fats obtained from all these nuts are too strong for my delicate stomach. I need an exact vegetable substitute for ghee and milk. I have tried kopra milk and almond milk before now. The physiological action of these milks is totally different from that of cow's milk. Do you know any vegetable substitutes for ghee or butter and for milk?"(Gandhi to P C Ray, 27 August 1918; see also Gandhi to Millie Polak, 31 August 1918)

So, his fundamental philosophy remained that the basis of dietetics (in his case, vegetarianism) is not physical but moral and, like any moral thing (politics included), required personal obedience. Following proper dietetic habits and vegetarianism strictly depends upon the greater moral force of personal obedience. In India, the daily routine of Gandhi included meals mostly comprised of vegetarian items, besides grains, soya beans, pulses, edible roots, tubers and green leaves and included fruits, both fresh and dry (nuts like almonds, pistachio and walnuts) (Gandhi, 1959: 1) andgoatmilk or cream milk. For rice and starch, which he detested, but as mentioned earlier, found red rice or unpolished rice and *Gur* to be suitable for the country teeming with poverty and malnutrition. He also advised that an individual should take not more than three meals a day; even two meals per day is sufficient for the sustenance of the body.

In each of his experiments, the objective was to bring out two basic things: (1) to systematise dietetics in such a fashion that would ensure the proper functioning of the body organs and eliminate the chances of unnecessary invitations for physical and mental stress, and (2) to organise dietetics so that it would become cheaper and economical. To address the objectives mentioned above, he also believed that each case has merit and hence needs to re-design the general formulation according to their region, availability of leaves, vegetables, and fruits, keeping all the vitamins, proteins, and proteins mineral intakes in mind. Nature has provided ample resources to feed and sustain human beings. Hence all food must be sourced from nature, avoiding any form of artificial preparation.

Conclusion

Gandhi was undoubtedly the modern-day influencer for unpolished fibrous food and the utility of raw food for sustainable development. Over time, his philosophy changed from identifying vegetarianism with effeminacy to a national masculine ideal to a political, moral and spiritual principle. Though Gandhi believed in vegetarianism till the end, he did not force anyone into his beliefs, thus when asked about the individual's freedom for the choice of food, he replied, unhesitatingly that, "Proof of the pudding is in the eating; let everyone do the experiments for himself"[xv].For this, he maintained, after years of experiment and research, that there cannot be a fixed dietetic rule for all constitutions. Each demands particular merit regarding dietetics. However,

the cardinal principle remains the same: (a) consumption of vegetables, fruits and pulses; (b) use of a minimum quantity of starch and salt; (c) dietetics for providing energy, vitality and supplements with the normal function of the body organs; (d) consumption of food for the relative freedom of women from the clutches of food preparation; (e) necessity to follow proper dietetics to achieve specific objectives in life, as food intake is the expression of the individual's inner-self. One must follow these to shadow his/her experiments with food and food habits. Hence, Gandhi's experiment with diet not only harnessed, literallyandfiguratively, a specific political system but also expanded the women's horizon obliterating the bondage of preparation of food. In the Indian family system, women are entrusted with the preparation of food and other household chores. He believed that if women were done away with this responsibility, they could effectively participate in the freedom movement like their male counterparts.This political strategy adopted by Gandhi synchronised the personal as political and vice-versa; the dietetics was a part of the complete synchronisation of his political/personal dichotomy.

Gandhi's dietetics converged at a point of personal quest and political, public involvement. It would need further research to identify how his dietetics paved the way for this personal and political convergence. Gandhi moved away from the 1891 model of the Indian shepherd of being the British counterpart of masculinity. Rather than the body, the mind and the spirit became important in the Gandhian philosophy of dietetics. He even thought of India having a 'national' character in the matter of dietetics. He knew very well that it was almost impossible to achieve a particular feat due to the food habits of different regions of India. Each region has its unique taste that cannot be taken daily, but he suggested that if we exchange our food habits, simplify our tastes, and produce healthy dishes, we would become national rather than remaining provincial in food and food habits. There are no combinations in different states but different styles in the same province among the various communities. We need to carefully study different castes, denominations, and different communities in different provinces to prepare such typical dishes for ordinary people. Thus, we see the vision of a man who tried to establish dietetics as a body of scientific knowledge to construct consciousness of nationalism among the common people of India. Some simple thoughts are envisioned through the experiments in his own life; sometimes for achieving *Satya*, sometimes for achieving *Swaraj*; sometimes to build a nation within the diverse communities like that of India; sometimes to keep the physical and mental well-being of the individual.

For Gandhi, these concepts regarding dietetics and all his other practices were not ideologically developed. Like his other ideas, the idea of dietetics grew by questioning his presuppositions and that he had to figure hard to attain them as something meaningful to his life and praxis. These notions arose from experiences of personal as well as the expectation of social, and it is this shift that is significant for further analysis on the idea of dietetics. The shift from personal to social in cases of dietetics may not be as prominent as Gandhi's other political practices. However, they are significant enough to be a potent weapon to develop the means (*Ahimsa*, *Satyagraha*, *brahmacharya*) to achieve the ultimate objective (*Satya*). They have been nuanced enough by exploring internal debates and contradictions constituting the relationship between personal and social. Hence, Gandhi's knowledge will be a steppingstone for augmenting such research because of the vast literature, both by Gandhi and regarding Gandhi, which is mostly untouched. In the context of attempts in today's world to limit food choices determined by faith or religion, Gandhi's stand

that one's diet should never be based on faith but should be reasoned out by individual requirements is quite inspirational. Gandhi wrote (1927: 257) 'to sum up all religion in terms of diet, as is often done in India, is as wrong as disregard all restraint regarding diet and give full reins to one's appetite'.

Food gave him a political cause to protest, right from his years in London and later South Africa, as he linked his quest for vegetarianism with several radical causes and his emerging concept of ahimsa or non-violence. Just as his techniques of protest and negotiation changed in politics, so made his choices and vows in food and dietary practice undergoing compromises and negotiations with the self. The fact that Gandhi abjured salt entirely from his diet at one point and again started taking moderate amounts can also be a pointer to the choice of salt as the weapon of protest in his *Dandi* March. From his dietary experiments, Gandhi understood the indispensability of salt, more so for hard-working people in India. Just as Gandhi strategised his food choices and portion control by adhering to vegetarianism to the tee, but with several changes and turnarounds in his dietary practice, he used strategies, albeit different ones, to negotiate the British, adhering to non-violence at its basics. Just like his dietary experiments, his political experiments, too, were steps towards self-restraint. Just as his politics was his spirituality, his food choices were his connection with the inner self. Fasting was, in essence, an act of restricting, as was the art of non-violence, a supreme lesson in restraint.

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End Notes

[i] In India he is known by various names like Bapu, Bapuji, Mahatma, Mahatma Gandhi, M.K. Gandhi and various other.
[ii] *Ahimsa* or non-violence is at the core of his ideas, which can be briefly described as the way of life which denounces any form of violence be it physical, verbal, in thoughts or deeds. *Ahimsa* originated from the Sanskrit root *san* [*verb*], which means to kill. The form *himsa* means "desirous to kill"; the prefix *a-* is a negation. So, *a-himsa* signifies "lacking any desire to kill". Literally interpreted, *ahimsa* means to be devoid of harm; to be completely harmless, not only to oneself and others, but to all living beings. Following the literal meaning the word is the opposite of *himsa*, "violence" which is to hurt the vitalities [*pranas*], through vibration due to the passions, which agitate mind, body, or speech. *Tattvarthadhigama* Sutra vii:13.
[iii] Another philosophical and political narrative of Gandhi, which in simple terms can be described as the passion or quest for knowing the ultimate, i.e., truth. This is the very reason he stated in many of his commentaries in Gujarati or in English or Hindi that *Ahimsa* is the bedrock of *Satygraha*. In his autobiography 'The Story of *My Experiments with Truth*,' he mentioned that the word was originally coined by Maganlal Gandhi as 'Sadagraha' (*Sat*=truth, *Agraha*= firmness but to make it formidablehe changed the term into *Satyagraha*).
[iv] https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/gandhi-fitness-freak-and-champion-of sustainable-food-63749.
[v] A weekly newspaper published by Gandhi, this was one among many newspapers like India Opinion from South Africa [in English], Golden Number from India [in English] Navjivan from India [both in Gujrati and Hindi], Harijan Sevak from India [in Hindi], Harijan Bandhu from India [in Gujrati] and Harijan from India in English.
[vi] Indian caste or sub-caste consisting generally of moneylenders or merchants or people involved in business activity. It is also important to note that not all mercantile classes are Baniyas. These sorts of sub-castes are generally found in northern or western part of India.
[vii] Gandhi's family in Gujarat hailed from the Vaishnava sect of Hindu religious order, which was traditionally prone and believed in vegetarianism. Being a staunch opponent of eating any sort of meat, eating or even bringing in cooked meat item was a taboo and strictly prohibited under religious, social and ethical code of conduct.
[viii] It was in a journal published by the society where the entire story of his early transformation can be found [Gandhi 1949; 9].
[ix] Gandhi learned violin, took elocution classes, attempted ballroom dance and even altered his clothes, which were distinct marks of British identity apart from language and belief in rule of law.
[x] The author has consciously used the subject in lieu of 'citizens' keeping the colonial period in mind.
[xi] https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/02/gandhis-raw-food-diet/582721. Accessed on 20.11.2020
[xii] Later on the advice of doctors, in 1829, he left this method of consumption of raw food.
[xiii] Gandhi to Ranchhodlal Patwari, 9 September 1918; see also Gandhi to C F Andrews, 29 August 1918.
[xiv] https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/mahatma-gandhi-diet_l_5cb6021fe4b082aab08d3954. Accessed on 20.11.2020
[xv] https://www.mkgandhi.org/health/diet_reform/21rice.html. Accessed on 20.11.2020

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Food Culture in the Socio-Religious life of the people in coastal Odisha: With special reference to *Pitha*

Bibhu. K. Mohanti

Abstract: The article focuses on *pitha* (a traditional cake) culture in the context of socio-religious practices in Odisha, India. It makes an attempt to show the way *pitha* are offered to Lord Jagannath and how it is also enjoyed as a household food by the people during festivities at the household or at community level. An attempt is made to emphasize on the traditional socio-religious practices related to *pitha* that still continue with availabilities of ingredients in the local niche. The Sree Jagannath temple of Puri being one of the four *Dhams* of Vaishnavite culture is also known as *Bhojana Kshetra* or *Anna Kshetra* for the gods. The presiding deity is also the epicenter for all socio-religious activities of the region and beyond. It is also an attempt to show how the populace of the region celebrates different festivities and gives due respect to nature and supernatural forces, thereby facilitating in creation of a conducive environment for co-existence.

Keywords: *socio-religious practices in Odisha, festivities at the household or at community level, traditions, Vaishnavite culture.*

Background

The state of Odisha in India earlier known by the name Utkala or Kalinga had a glorious past. After defeat in the Kalinga War to Raja Ashoka, Kalinga came to limelight during the reign of The third Chedi king Kharavela. The influence of his power was felt from Mathura in the north to Pandya Kingdom in the south and from eastern coast to western coast in India due to his extensive military advancements. The state was known for its navigational expertise and spread of its trading relationship to Southeast Asia. Located on the eastern coast, it is known for its rich stone carving skills, handloom, lacquer craft, filigree work, appliqués work and many other fine crafts... Odisha is surrounded by the states of Chhattisgarh in the west, Andhra Pradesh in the south,west Bengal and Jharkhand in the north and Bay of Bengal in the east. Odishais spread over an area of 155707 square kilometer. Out of the five geomorphological regions of Odisha the coastal plain is the most important one as it has the highest concentrated population.

Food plays an important role in shaping the culture of the consumers. Interestingly people in coastal Odisha observe large number of festivals. Lord Jagannath of Puri is the most revered deity of Odisha. In Hindu tradition, the food ethos of the people is greatly influenced by the Aryan beliefs and practices in which food is part of cosmic moral cycle. It may be noted that as per the Great Tradition of Odisha in general and Puri in particular, some food are considered innately pure and

some are not. For example, cow milk and its products are sacred but it is not the same with buffalo milk Chakrabarty (2011:38)

The traditional food habit of a region is eco-centric and heavily depends upon the locally available food resources. It can be said that this association is not necessarily confined to any political boundaries but had its jurisdiction in its eco-cultural boundaries. Traditionally some of these food items had a strong linkage with the socio- religious practices of the people of an area.The importance of rice ispresent in every facet of Odiya people's life and is largely reflected in their socio-religious life. Lord Jagannath takes *pakhalabhata* (soaked rice) at least twice a day and it is the habit of majority people of rural Odisha.

In a given culture it is generally observed that its members exploit the abundance of food resources of a region and adapt or tune to the food pattern emerged there in. It is observed that *pitha* of different kinds are popular in different parts of India, but in the eastern part that is among the states like Odisha, West Bengal and Assam, they have a common nomenclature *pitha* and are believed to have been originated from rice flour.

Pitha's are steamed, or baked, roasted or fried in oil or ghee. Some are prepared over a hot iron plate. Most of them are sweet in taste. In Odisha one of the most prevalent food item of the menu during festivities are the variety of *pitha*, which is a kind of traditional rice cake. They offer to deities with reverence and affection. These are then consumed and shared with near and dear ones, neighbors etc. Some of them are also offered to the members who provide them service on different occasions (the practice of *jajmani* system). Some are also prepared for the domesticated animals, like cows and bullocks. Ingredients for different *pitha*'s vary. Main ingredients are rice, black gram, coconut and jaggery. Rice is the staple food crop in the state of Odisha and people say that it is synonymous to food. The state covers about 44.4 7 lakh hectares. Das (2012:1.) stated that Jeypur track in South Odisha has been identified as a putative secondary centre of origin of cultivated rice. Age old social customs and festivals of the state have strong relevance to different phases of rice cultivation. Akshaya *Tritiya* (in May to June) marks the sowing of seed of the rice. *Raja Sankranti* in mid-June marks the completion of sowing. *Garba Sankranti* symbolizes the reproductive phase of rice. *Nuakha*i (August – September) and *Lakshmi puja* (October – November) coincide with harvesting of upland and lowland rice respectively. Therefore, paddy culture in Odisha is unique in many ways. And in brief the evolution of various socio-religious functions of the region will be discussed to show how food is an integral part of any culture and how cultural values are associated with it. Paddy having been processed in different ways has different cultural value attached to it. Rice processed from paddy is broadly of two kinds. While the *aruachaula* (raw rice) has a sacred value in Odisha, the boiled *ushnachaula* rice does not get the same cultural sanction. Similarly the bi-product of *aruachaula* (raw rice) has a sacred stamp while boiled rice does not. Normally puffed rice is not offered to the deities in Odisha as it is made from boiled rice while *khai* i.e. puffed paddy is prepared directly from paddy and is offered as it is considered pure. In the earlier times variety of paddy by the name *Ratan Chudi, Haladia, Magura, Bhutia, Dhala Pakhia, Kala Pakhia, Baula Bankui, Gola Bandi, Biali* etc. were cultivated. But then in the coastal districts like Puri, Cuttack and other adjoining districts rice named as, *Pathara Mukuta, Naandi, Dhala Pakhia* were preferred for making the *pitha* since the rice is coarse and very whitish in colour.

Another important item in making of *pitha* is black gram (*Vignamungo L*), believed to have been originated in India. The reference of this crop can be traced to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and in *Charak Samhita*. Interestingly India is the largest consumer and producer of black gram in the world. Odisha is one of the major black grams producing state in India. Umerkote in undivided Koraput district produces one of the best varieties of black gram. It has lot of health benefits as it contains proteins, fibers, fats, carbohydrates and vitamin. It is a boon to woman as it has iron, folic acid, calcium, magnesium, potassium which are very essential. Black gram consumption helps to reduce cholesterol and improve cardiovascular functioning.

Similarly, another important ingredient used is *jiggery* or sugar it is obtained from sugarcane which belongs to one of the species of tall perennial true grasses of the genus *Saccharum*, native to the warm temperate to tropical regions of South Asia and used for making of *jaggery*.

The study adopted all standard anthropological tools and techniques including participant observation and interview method for data collection along with survey of literature both in English and Odiya.

Tradition of *pitha* culture

Odisha from a hoary past has the tradition of preparing *pitha* especially for offering it to their deities. Mishra narrates that certain festivities have got their name from the same food items and therefore, there is a proverb (1989).

"Ayila Chitau Nani
Bara Osha paraba Sangare Gheni
Sambara Dasamira Alana Jau
Sabu Osha Bara Eithi Thau"

The above proverb denotes that the *Chitau Nani* (elder sister), arrives with 12 kinds of fasting and festivities. All this culminates with the salt less gruel of *Sambhar Dashami*. It may be noted that *Chitaunani* is nothing but *Chitaupitha* popular in coastal Odisha.

The consciousness about traditional food is gaining importance in the recent past. At first it gives us that rich cultural information, which makes us proud that the food items which were looked down upon as a rural food habits are realized to be the wealth of our time-tested food tradition for a better health. Secondly, the desire to hunt for our traditional food habit, by members of scientific fraternity has emphasized the need to fall back to such food as it is advantageous to a given environment for a healthy living. In Orissa, as narrated above, *pitha*s are important food items whose socio- religious significance can be supplemented by the present-day research findings. Roy (2007) has narrated the importance of fermentation in pulses found in food items of Odisha especially in the *pithas* of Odisha as it has many scientific advantages like pulse digestibility, detoxifying pulses by reducing haemaglutinin, phytate, oligosaccharides and trypsin inhibitor, etc. He further narrated that it can significantly improve flavor, nutritional value, and appearance and reduces cooking time.

Lord Jagannath and *pitha*

The influence of Lord Jagannath culture has a strong impact on the people of Odisha and vice versa. So, the cultural practices of the people are many a times based upon the observations from

the rites and rituals of their most beloved and revered deity i.e., Lord Jagannath. It is even said that lord Jagannath in Puri Temple is the highly humanized deity. In the daily rituals Lord brushes his teeth and takes bath, he changes his clothes and wears new clothes robes and ornaments.

From hoary past, the Jagannath Dham is known to be the place of dining for the Gods. It is otherwise popular for its rich and elaborate *Mahaprasad* which is offered to the deity. Mishra (1971),classifies them as *Samkhudy* and N*isamkhudy bhogas*. The former is prepared inside the *rosaghara* or temple kitchen and are prepared from rice, blackgram and other vegetables. The latter category of *bhoga* are prepared outside the kitchen but inside the temple complex and include *bhogas* made out of flour, wheat, ghee, candy etc.

Chakravarti (2011), narrates that offerings of food occupies the central position in the act of worship, at this sacred central point. It is said that food prepared for the god is called *bhoga*. After the ritual offering of the *bhoga to Jagannath* and other deities, it becomes *Prasad. Bhoga* is classified as *Kotha Bhoga* and *Mandap bhoga*. While the former is the scheduled offering by the king and temple trustee, the latter is for public and different *Matha's* (Hindu monastery). Here the discussion will be confined to *kotha bhoga* only as the later is flexible with prefixed conditions and is mostly based upon demand and supply.

The menu is exhaustive. Mishra (1971), narrates a popular proverb that

"Sada rasa vyanjan Nana yati
Chapanabhoglagedinarati"
"Multifarious dishes of six fold tastes
fifty six Bhogas are offered day and night".

So, it is said that lord is offered *Chhappan Bhog* (fifty six kinds of food items which includes rice i.e., *mahaprasada, dal*, different kinds vegetables and cakes, sweets, etc.) everyday. During the feudal regime everyday all the fifty six varieties were made and offered. At present, the same menu is followed but at times some items are dropped.

Like in many other temples where cooking for the god is considered to be a *seva* (service), the right to cook is hereditary at Jagannath Temple. The temple administration has structured arrangements to perform different duties by different community members. The only difference is that in the earlier days it was under the patronage and control of King of Puri, but at present it is the Temple Trust which coordinates the age-old tradition under the patronage of Government of Odisha. The *sevakas*, are traditionally assigned the duty of cooking food for the gods and are called *Supakar* or S*uar*. Since the present paper is an attempt to understand the *pitha* culture of Odisha the *pitha* tradition in Jagannath temple will be discussed only and therefore, an attempt has been made to highlight how much importance is given to *pitha* in the sacred complex of Puri and how *pithas* are not just offered on daily basis, but it also shows the different *Pitha* offering in different festivals.

Through an elaborate system, the traditional varieties of *pithas* are prepared every day for the God. Even on special occasions special *pithas* are prepared and offered. There are special and dedicated *suar* for cooking *pithas*. In folk belief it is said that *Suar*is Lord Jagannath's wife. And *Puja Pandas* are his mother, while Daitas are his brother (Misra and Nandi 2007). Again, different kinds of *Suar*

are involved for different roles. The *Pitha Suara* prepares the *pitha, and bindua* are those group of people who prepare the *binda*, and provides the same to *pitha Suar*. They are also involved in kneading dough from *atta* (wheat flour), black gram powder/paste, etc. The c*hanapua* prepares small size *pithas* like *Parijata. Paguas* are those people who make *paga. Paga* is the base material for *pitha*. They also prepare the *pura* that is the stuffings for *pithas*. The *Tolabadus* are involved in counting and arranging, what has been prepared by *Pagua* and *Sevakas*. They cover their face with a piece of long cloth, usually a thin towel locally called *gamcha* tied around the face, lpcally known as *baghamuhan*. The face and mouth is covered for maintaining purity. The *Birhibuha* are those servitors who carry the paste of black gram to *Kotha Ghara* to hand them over to *Kothaghara suara.* The responsibility of making the same in an environment of sanctity and purity lies with *Mahasuar*.

There are some *pithas* in the fifty-six kinds of *Mahaprasad* that are offered to Lord Jagannath. The nomenclature of some of the *pithas* is not directly related with the word *pitha* for each item, but they are *pithas* prepared for the lord. *Pitha*un like *Mitha* (sweet meat) has a subtle difference. While *Mithas* are purely sweet items, *pithas* could be both sweetish and saltish. Some of the *pithas* are as follows: *Arisa, Badapitha, Chanda Puli, Chakuli, Saru Chakuli, Chandra Matho Puli, Hansapuli, Enduri, Jhilli, Gaintha, Kakera, Bada Kanti,Sana Kanti, Bada Kakera, Sana Kakera, Tata Kakera, Goti Kakera, Manda, Matho Puli, Antariksha Manda, Lahuni Manda, Pitha Puli, Parijata, Pura Pitha Sana Pitha , Saptapuri Pitha* etc.

It is said that the *Kothabhoga* is offered five times a day to Lord Jagannath at different times. It is known by different names. In the early morning the *bhoga* is called *Gopal Ballabhbhoga* which is followed by *Sakala Dhupa offered at* at11a.m., *Madhyana Dhupa* is offered around 2 p.m., the *Sandhya dhupa* that is the evening meal is offered at around 6 p.m., and finally *Bada Sinhari Dhupa are given* around 11 p.m.

In the *Sakala Dhupa,* lord is offered *Bodo Kanti, Matho Puli, Hansapuli, Pitha Puli, Chandapuli, Jhilli, Enduri* along with other items. It is said that *Enduripitha* is one of the favourite items of Lord Jagannath. *Arisa, Matho Puli* along with *Parijatha* and *Pura Pitha* or *Suora Pitha* is offered in the *Madhyanha Dhupa*. The *Sandhya Dhupa* comprising *Pura Pitha, Arisha ,Kakera, Matho Puli* are offered to the Lord. *Chhota Kanti* a kind of *pitha* made of black gram paste is offered to the Lord Jagannath finally in the *Bada Sinhari Dhupa*.

Table No. 1: Types of *pitha* offered to Lord Jagannath in Puri Temple through *kothabhoga*

Sl.No.	Name of the *KothaBhoga*	Time	Name of the *pitha*and offered along with other items
1.	*SakalaDhupa*	Around 11a.m	*(1)Badakanti, (2)Matho Puli,(3)HansoPuli (4) Chanda Puli, (5)Jhilli, and(6)Endusi*
2.	*Madhyanhadhupa*	Around 2p.m.	*(1) Arisa, (2) Parijata, and (3) Pura pitha*
3.	*Sandhya dhupa*	6p.m	*(1)Arisa, (2) Pura pitha, (3)Kakera (4)Matha Puli, and (5)Parijata*
4.	*BadaSinhariDhupa*	Around 11p.m.	*(1)Chhotokanti*

On various *tithi,* indifferent seasons, certain special foods are also offered to Lord Jagannath at the inner sanctuary, apart from the offering made throughout the day. On *Makara Sankranti, Lord* Jagannath is offered as many as 84 varieties of food items. The *pitha* items include *Chena pitha, Gainthapitha, Enduri, Khei Manda, Khanda, Manda, Kanti, BandaKanti, Kakara, Hansa Keli, Chandra Kanti, Vasanta Arisa, Paga Arisa, Parijataka, Matha Puli, Sankranti Madhopuri, Antriksh Munda, Munda, Saru Chakulipurapitha, etc.*

Nabannatithi comes in the month of *Margashirsha* i.e., on the 8th month, according to the local calendar, which is equivalent to November to December of the English calendar. Among the special food prepared, *pithas* are offered which includes items like *Badapitha, Sana pitha, Bada Kakera, Sana Kakera, Bada Kanti, Sana Kanti, Arisha,* etc.

The occasion of *Aruna Adhibaso* is observed on the 6th day of *Margashirsha* month, i.e. mid November to mid-December month. Lord Jagannath is adorned in a special dress and offered special food, which includes *Sana pitha, Sana Kanti, Sana Kakera, Sana and Bodo Arisa.*

During *Pusabhiseko,* that is on the occasion of *Pusa-Purnima,* the full moon day in the month of *Pausa* (December to January), the *Abhisheka* that is the coronation ceremony of Lord Jagannath is observed. The ritual is associated with offering of special food items to the deity which includes *Sana Arisa*.

During *Basant Panchami,* the offering includes S*ana kanti and Bada Arisa.* In S*aptapuri Amavasya, tatokakera* is offered along with *Satapuripitha*. During *Badu Ekadashi,* various kinds of *pithas* are offered to the Lord. It is said that during *Jatabhoga,* 56 varieties of *pithas* are offered. It may be noted that apart from the above narratives, *pithas* are also offered on different occasions. Mishra (1971), writes that at Jagannath temple *pithas* are also used in the sacrifice rituals. It is stated that non animal sacrifices are performed according to *Tara Rahasya,* a mediaeval *tantric* treatise, Lord Jagannath is conceived as Kalika or Durga.

*"Kalau Kali Kalau Krishna Kalau Gopal Kalik*a"

In the Kaliyuga *Kali* and Krsna (or Gopal), are predominating deities and Gopal (Krishna), himself is Kalika.

As per the tradition, vegetable or food sacrifices are performed on two Sankranti that is on the *Makar Sankranti* and the *Daksinayana Sankranti*. The sacrifice constitutes of*enduri* cake,made up of black gram mixed with ginger and *hing* (asafetida) or curd with candy. But on *Makar Sankranti*day, 8 sacrifices are made after mid-day meals. Sankranti is the end of planetary positions. Misra and Nandi (2007) have given an elaborate description of *Mahaprasad* offered to the Lord from which the author has selected some *pitha*s only which are offered to the Lord Jagannath.

Bada Kanti*:* This *Mahaprasad* is prepared by soaking the black gram and making a batter for *bara/ vada*. This is added to raw rice powder, beaten ginger and *jeera* (cumin seeds). All the above mentioned items are properly mixed and then pressed and flattened with the palm of the hands and fried in pure ghee.

Sana Kanti*:* This is prepared in the same way as the *bara* or *Bada Kanti,* but the difference is that it is shaped like slightly elongated human waist and then fried in pure ghee.

Sarapuli: In this item the main ingredients are the black gram, raw rice powder, pure ghee, etc. Soaked black gram is ground and the batter is made in the same way as that of *bara / vada.* To the paste rice powder, beaten ginger, salt, asafetida, etc. and are mixed well. Then ghee is applied on the palm of the hand and paste mixture is shaped like Puri. The puri is fried in pure ghee at a very low temperature.

Suar Pitha: Soaked black gram is ground and raw rice powder is added to it together with smashed ginger, salt and asafetida. The mixture is made in such a manner that the paste is very thick in its concentration. Pure ghee is applied on banana leaf and kept aside. Themixture is placed on the leaf in oval or egg shape. This is then fried in ghee. After sometime this is brought out and with the help of knife holes are made on the leaf. These holes are made for the better boiling and for percolation of the ghee inside the cake. Again this is fried in the ghee. Seven of such cakes are offered to the deity.

Arisha: This can be made from both sugar and jaggery. Either of them is boiled till a sticky solution is obtained. To this is added the raw rice powder, cardamom and stirred well. The pan is brought down from the hearth and then little by little the mixture is taken in hand or on a banana leaf. It is tapped and fried in pure ghee.

Bada Kakara: Initially wheat flour and *jaggery* are smeared with required amount of water. Then little by little the mixture is taken and made into balls, which are fried in pure ghee.

Jhadei Lada *(Chadhai Lada)*: Soaked black gram are *grinded* just like making up of batter for *vada* and then to it is added little amount of salt and raw rice powder. This is then mixed manually for a good spell of time. Then this is fried in ghee like *vada*. Subsequently, this is mixed thoroughly and then fried in ghee.

Khaira Chula: The rice powder (raw rice) is smeared with required amount of water and then small pieces are fried in ghee. Then these are made powder by breaking them thoroughly. This is then mixed with the sweet solution which is prepared over fire which when achieves sticky status, few ingredients are added, viz. *jai phala* (nutmeg) powder, *juani/ajwain, (*Carum *copticum)*, black pepper, half broken cloves etc. is considered appropriate. This mixture is well mixed and then by palm smaller ball shaped items are made in such a manner that it gives the appearance of hair on top of it.

Mandua: The ingredients include sugar, cottage cheese, cardamom, clove, wheat flour and camphor. At first, sugar is ground and kept aside. Then clove and big cardamom are half broken and kept aside. The cottage cheese is nicely squeezed and kneaded. After this little- by- little wheat floor is added into it and kneaded again. While doing so clove and cardamom powder is added and kneaded. On an oiled leaf, the mixture is taken and given the shape of small balls and fried in ghee. While it gets slightly reddish it is taken out of the pan and powdered sugar is sprinkled over it and placed one above the other.

Hansakeli: At first the kernel of the coconut is peeled and kept aside. Syrup of sugar or *jaggery* is made and peeled coconut is added to it along with camphor and powdered big cardamom. Soaked black gram is ground with very little water. To it raw rice powder is added and mixed well. Now some amount of the mixture is taken and to it, the coconut is stuffed and this is then fried in ghee.

Gaintha: At first water is made to boil to which required amount of grated coconut and raw rice powder is added and mixed well. After taking the mixture down from the oven these are taken in the palm of the hand and the mixture is divided and given shape with the hand. Some amount of water is put in a wide mouthed vessel, a cloth is tied on the mouth of the vessel and on it the *Gainthapitha* are placed and then covered. The pot is placed on a wood o fueled hearth. The water boils and the steam coming from below cooks the pitha.

Darasua Badi: Soaked black gram is ground without water to which the raw rice powder is added and stirred well. Required amount of salt, asafetida, shredded coriander leaves, half friedcumin seeds are mixed properly and smaller balls are made from the mixture and fried in pure ghee. This is fried with due care to prevent reddening.

Pitha in the socio-cultural milieu in Odisha

People from the coastal region, have a tradition of offering different *pitha*s first to plants and animals on festive occasions. Certain glimpses of the socio-cultural life amongst the people of Odisha on different festivities reflect how after such offering people enjoy the delicacies. As per Odiya calendar, in the month of *Jyestha, Raja* festival is celebrated along with *Siva Bibhaha* during which *pithas* are prepared. *Chittau Amavasya* and *Gamha Purnima* are celebrated in the month of *Bhadra*. Other functions celebrated include *Janmashtami* (birthday of Lord Krishna) and *Sasti Osa*. There is the tradition of sending *pithas* especially the *Arisa pitha* with other *pithas* and sweets with newly married bride just after marriage is followed even today. *Arisa pitha* is considered as auspicious. It is normally given in *Sasuoliki* (gift for mother-in–law). Also, these are sent in bulk for distribution among friends, relatives and neighbours. In the traditional villages landlords and other members of the village offer *pithas* during different festivals to members belonging to barbers, *dhobi* (washer man) and other communities who provide them the service during life cycle rituals and other occasions. Similarly, the landless labourers working for their landlords or even the share croppers etc. are offered *pithas*. In the cultural milieu of Odisha in different Odiya months, different festivals are celebrated. An attempt is made to narrate only some festivals in selected months associated with *pitha* making, due to paucity of space.

Raja: It is the most important and unique festival of coastal districts celebrated during the mid of June especially for unmarried girls. Spanning over three days, during the *Jyestha* month girls are treated with undue care by brothers and parents. During the traditional days, girls were adored so much for these three days that they even do not walk bare footed on the mother earth. Swings are erected for them to relax and play. Normally they do not eat rice, so special *pitha* called *podapitha* are prepared for the occasion. This is made by adding rice powder to the boiling water on the hearth. It is constantly stirred so as to prevent clot. To this are added sufficient amount of grated and cut pieces of coconut, sugar or *jaggery*.

Chitou Amavasya: It is a unique festival in which *Chitoupitha* is prepared. It is celebrated during the new moon day of *Shravan* month. On this day Lord Jagannath is decorated with *chita*on his forehead also called *chitrapa. Lord* is offered *Chitoupitha*. In the rural areas,a type of mollusc known as *pilla* is offered by girls. It is believed that by offering small pieces of *pitha* to Gandesuni,

a female form of evil power will be pleased. The girls pray, "*O Gandesuni* please accept our offering and stop biting the feet of our brothers and father while working in the field. Nanda (1989) narrates that scientifically there is an advantage in consuming such items as it is very simple for digestion, as no oil is added and is steamed. During this period of the year, heavy rain occurs and it is a practice to consume simple diets as there is a folk belief to eat simple diet during monsoon.

Gamha Purnima: Celebrated in the memory of killing of the demon Gamha by Balabhadra. The demon was killing the cows. Mohanty (2021) narrated in Paralakhemundi, Nayagarh and other rural areas a special jumping event called "Gamha Diyan" (Gamha jump) is organized for remembering Balarama. For this the nameof the festival is *Gamha Purnima*. But today it is popularly famous by the name *Raksha Bandhan* in pan Indian context. It is uniquely celebrated in rural Odisha. On this day cattle are given bath and are garlanded. Oil is applied to their horns and *pithas* are offered to them. These *pithas* are specially prepared traditionally in large brass vessels, locally called *handas*, and are also offered to agricultural labourers.

Khudurukuni Osa: It is a popular community- level festival among the unmarried girls in the coastal Odisha during the month of *Bhadraba* (mid August-mid September). In this festival, they worship *MaaMangala* on Sunday and it is observed for four consecutive Sundays. This is observed for safety, welfare, and long life of their brothers. It has been a practice from time immemorial when the male members used to travelby boat to South East Asia, especially to Java and Sumatra for trading. The occasion is based on the story of *Tapoi*, a girl, born to a traders' family (*sadhaba* family), in which she is the only sister to seven brothers and the story narrates how she faced the ordeal of her sisters-in-law when her brothers were away for trading after the demise of her parents. Her encounter with girls praying to *MaaMangala* in the forest prompted her to join them in worshiping *MaaMangala*. This resulted in safe return of her brothers and punishment to their wives. Even today it is observed with great pomp and reverence by girls at community level in team spirit. At the beginning of the *puja*, each girl offers a coconut, and after four weeks or sometimes on the fifth week it is broken and five *Manda pithas* are made and offered to *MaaMangala* by every girl. It is then taken by their family members.

Sasti puja: It is observed on the sixth day of the *shuklapaksha* of *Bhadra* month and is dedicated to goddess *Sasti*. She is considered as benefactor and protector of children. Also, people believe her to be the deity of vegetation and reproduction. It is a regular *puja* observed at household level for a child especially after its birth either on the 6th day or on the 21st day since birth. Annually on a child's birthday, this *puja* is performed to worship the goddess for safety of a child. Various *pitha's* like *Chakulipitha*, *Kakerapitha*, and specially, the unique *Budha Chakulipitha* (pan cake) as a birth day special item unique to the state of Odisha. These are offered to the goddess. It is a typical folk performance where the role of Brahmin does not exist.

Dussahra: It is observed in Cuttack town with grandeur during September/October (Ashwin month), which is said to be as old as 1100 years. On this occasion, various *pitha*s are made but then*Manda pitha,kakarapitha* occupies the prime position.

Badaosa: This festival is celebrated in honour of Lord Shiva during the Kartika month (October-November) primarily at Dhabaleswar temple in Cuttack district. In this festival special *bhoga*, i.e. *Prasad* locally called '*gajabhoga'* and *attali* are offered. *Gaja Bhoga* is similar to *Manda pitha*

with a *Chula* or protrusion (phallus shaped). The ingredients include rice powder, sugar, gur, moong and coconut. This festival is celebrated based upon the story that Lord Indra, who had taken a holy dip here on full moon day in the month of *Kartik,* to get rid of leprosy, the dreaded disease as a result of being cursed by Lord Brahma. Interestingly, lord Jagannath is also offered special dishes on this day and after the offerings is over he is dressed in *barasinghara* which is considered very auspicious.

Prathama Astami: The festival is a prayer for a long life and prosperity of the eldest child. It also creates a unique bond between the maternal uncle and the eldest nephew or niece. In this festival, the eldest child receives new clothes turmeric leaf, fruits and sweet from the maternal uncle till his or her marriage. On the day of the festival the eldest child is offered a lamp ovation,usually by the maternal aunt in some families or any senior ladies in some other families followed by elaborate rituals and offering of *Enduripitha* to gods and Goddesses especially Lord Ganesha and Sashti Devi. The uniqueness of the *endure pitha* during this festivities is that the pitha is wrapped in turmeric leaf and prepared. Thus the pitha gives a unique aromatic smell of turmeric leaf.

Samba Dashmi: It is observed in the *Pausha Masa* (mid December-midJanuary) on the tenth day of *Shukla Paksha.* This festival enjoys a distinctive position in preparation and offering of *Pitha* unique to the state of Odisha. It is observed in honour of Lord Surya the *sun god,* as he had cured Samba (the son of Lord Krishna) from the dreaded disease leprosy after penance to Lord Surya for 12 years near Konark temple. In the coastal districts, mothers usually pray to *sun god* for better health of their children. They promise a *pitha* to be offered to the *Sun God* after the birth of a child. This *Pitha* is offered to *Sun god* on the date of observing *Samba Dasami*. On this day, women get ready for starting the preparation before sunrise after taking bath. In the early morning a variety of of *Pitha*s are prepared in the name of each member of the family especially the children. *Khichudi, Ghadaghadia Tarkari* (a curry) are prepared and offered to the *Sun god*. The *pitha* may include *Manda pitha, Kakerapitha, Podapitha, Enduripitha, Chunchi Patarapitha, Arisa pitha* or any other *pitha* as chosen by mother or head of the house hold. It may also include sweet items. The *puja* ends with the offering of *Budhachakuli* in the evening of the p*ooja.*

Bakula Amavasya: This festival is celebrated during the *Paush* month (mid December to mid January). The main purpose of celebrating this festival is to get a better harvest of mango. During this occasion, special food and *Gainthapitha* are prepared and offered at the temples and near the mango trees.

Table No.2:Some Festivalspopular for *pitha*in selected months.

Sl.No.	Odia month	English equivalent	Name of festival	Name of the *pitha*
1.	*Baisakhe*	Mid April-mid May	*Akshaya Tritiya*	*Baisakhe*
2.	*Jyestha*	Mid May-mid June	*Siva Bibhaha, Raja*	***PodaPitha(Main)*** with other*pitha*
3.	*Shravana*	Mid July-Mid August	*ChitouAmavashya*	*Tala Manda*
			Jagulai Panchami	-
			Gamha Purnima	*Enduri*

4.	*Bhadraba*	MidAugust-Mid September	*Khudurukuni* *SastiOser* *BudheiOsa*	*Chakuli* *Varieties of pitha*
5.	*Aswina*	MidSeptember-Mid October	*BijayaDasami*	*Kakara*
6.	*Kartika*	Mid October-mid November	*-BadaOsa*	*-Gaja*
7.	*Margasira*	Mid November- mid December	*Prathama Astami*	*EndurisPitha*
			MargasiraGurubara *Pandu Purnima*	*Chitau* *Manda Pitha*
8.	*Pausha*	Mid December-Mid January	*Samba Dashmi*	*Arisa,Chakuli,ChunchiPatara,EnduriPitha etc.(almost all)*

Though different *pithas* are linked to different festivals, it is also prepared and consumed on other occasions. Brief narratives of some *pitha* making is given below in order to explain more about its affiliation to the people of the region.

Podapitha: During the Raja festival *Podapitha* is the most important item to relish with. *Podapitha* is prepared from the batter prepared from rice mixed with coconut cut pieces, resins, cashew nuts, and sugar or *jaggery*. In the traditional days the baking was done by using hot charcoal both at the top and bottom in an unique way. It is done in such a manner that the mixture used to be packed in Sal (*Shorearobusta*) or banana leaves. Completion of cooking is tested by inserting an iron rod after baking. It is sliced into small pieces and served. It has a lifespan of 2 to 3 days.

Chunchi patra pitha: This is prepared especially during *Samba Dashmi* festival and in some part of Odisha it is offered during *Bata Osha* festival. This *pitha* is very thin like that of *dosa* but it is made from rice paste and no black gram is added. The feelings are grated coconut, cottage cheese (prepared from butter milk and sugar or *jaggery*). Usually the *pitha* is folded in a rectangular shape.

Chitaupitha: This is specially prepared during *Chitalagiamavasya*. It is prepared from a mixture of rice and coconut. Normally, this is baked in a special bowl shaped earthen vessel. But these days everyone is using a metal utensil. At first oil is applied on the vessel then the batter prepared from rice and coconut with required salt is then poured into the oiled vessel. This is then covered for faster preparation. The *pitha* is thus one sided roasted. It is normally eaten with sugar or with some curry like *dalma (*a typical ethnic food item prepared with dal and green vegetable*s)*. Similar *pitha* consumption can be seen in Kerala by the name *Appam*.

Enduripitha: This is a special preparation relished in the *Prathama ashtmi* (in the *Pausha* month) festival. The ingredients include black gram, rice coconut and *jiggery*. The *pitha* is steamed by placing the fermented batter in a turmeric leaf and folding the leaf in the midbrib. Normally the turmeric leaves are not around the year, so tender banana leaves are used when turmeric leaves are not available. The stuffing is done with a mixture of coconut and jaggery or sugar. Sometime the cottage cheese prepared from butter milk along with sugar or jaggery is also stuffed.

Gainthapitha: This is offered during *Bakula Amavasya (in Pausha* month) for a better harvest of mango. It is observed in December- January as mango blossoms during this period. So, women

carry the *Gaintha pitha* to their mango tree, and offered near it. The *pitha* is prepared by boiling water to which the required amount of salt is added and slowly and steadily raw rice powder is added while doing so it is stirred well so that no clump is formed in the prepared mixture. When it is ready the mixture is then taken away from the hearth. Now a wide mouth vessel is placed on the hearth with half-filled water. The mouth is now tied with a cotton cloth. The prepared mixture is kneaded by hand to create a flat oval safe *Gainthapitha* and placed on the cloth tied at mouth of the vessel. After placing the *Gaintha* it is covered to catch the steam for faster cooking.

Muanpitha: It is prepared on various occasions like *Gamha Purnima (Shravana month),* and other festivities. It has a large sized Idli like structure and tastes the same as it is prepared from same combination of rice and black gram. The only variation is that, it is sometimes prepared without any stuffing and sometime it is stuffed with a mixture of coconut and sugar. The mixture is given a rounded shape. A vessel having wide mouth is taken and filled with water. A fine cloth is tied over the mouth of the vessel. The *pithas* are placed on the cloth and the vessel is placed on fire. The *pithas* are prepared by steaming.

Concluding Remarks

Continuation of age-old tradition has become a challenge in the contemporary modern age. Influenced by Mughal and British Rule and diffusion of western culture with formal education to every child, traditional norms are losing values. Since we are now in a scientific environment children have developed their scientific temperament accordingly. Nelson et.al.(2016) narrates that in USA Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee in 2015 concluded on the importance of plant based food and its lesser environmental impact. Dash (2021) narrated that Odiya world view has emerged out of an extensive rice-based culture, which gave rise to a symbolic ideology by conceptualizing rice as a symbolic representation of wealth and of Goddess Lakshmi in all socio-cultural manifestations. A different narrative emerges while visualising rice culture in the backdrop of the regionalism prevailing in religious beliefs, which is in the core of that culture. In Odisha Goddess Lakshmi has devoted followers especially amongst the women folk. At the same time Vishnu, i.e. Lord Jagannath is unique in Odisha. This is due to the inclusive nature of Jagannath cult. It has evolved from a tribal deity belonging to 'little tradition' to an established deity of 'Greater tradition' (Redfield, 1960). This has been possible due to the age -old tradition of association of the Royal families of Puri in managing the system under the guidance of spiritual leaders or saints like Sankaracharya, Ramanujam, Chaitanya, and many others. Therefore, in Odisha the unique relationship between man and divinity in the backdrop of available local resources is nicely synthesized. The emergence of Jagannath cult over centuries has been a unique inclusive religious activity spread all over Odisha, West Bengal, and other adjoining areas. It can be said that in all these rice - producing areas *pitha* has an important place in the annual food calendar of the people, and interestingly Jagannath cult is also popular in these regions. On the contrary, if we look at adjoining states like Andhra Pradesh or the southern state of Tamil Nadu which are also very rich rice producing areas, neither *pitha* (except *Idli* and *Dosa*) nor the Jagannath cult is in existence; though for establishing Jagannath cult prominent south Indian saints like Sankaracharya and Ramanujam have immense role. When we narrow down to Odisha and specifically to the coastal area, then we can see a strong connection between man and divine forces especially in the

backdrop of food, based upon available local resources. Chakravarty (2011:66) mentioned that the devotee comes to Jagannath Dham with two precise intentions one is *Darshana* another is *Mahaprasad*. For a devotee, *Mahaprasad* of the Jagannath temple is the most holy food that one must have in one's life time as it gives them profound piety (*Punya*) and washes out all their sins (*papa*) in their earthly life. Pertaking *Mahaprasad* is an act that brings the final emancipation of the soul. For the *Sevak a*s and the people living in the holy city of Puri and its neighborhoods *Mahaprasad* is an essential part of every social occasion and ceremony in the life of the people. In the life cycle rituals, that is, in birth, marriage, and death rituals, guests are served with *Mahaprasad* before the feast begins. It is believed that this gives them eternal bliss. *Pithas* originating from rice culture are offered to Lord Jagannath four times a day apart from special offerings on festive occasion, and the people of Odisha prepare *pithas* on different festivities. Emergence of *pitha* culture has been possible only because of cultivation of rice throughout the state of Odisha. It is to be noted that some varieties of rice are specially meant for preparing the *pithas*. Similarly, the cultivation of black gram is done immediately after harvesting of rice and it demands least effort and care. The cultivation of coconut in the coastal district of Odisha is common as it is the natural habitat of the plant. It is phenomenally high in Puri district which is the abode of Lord Jagannath. Good variety of *jaggery* is produced from the sugar cane fields in Nayagarh district which was part of the undivided Puri district.

Therefore *pitha* culture has emerged from rice culture and is closely knitted to the religious and socio-cultural fabric of the region. It is believed that local resources are nothing but manifestation of divine gift from almighty for consumption of not just the human beings but of others, which itself is a unique process of mutual respect for one another.

Nelson et.al.(2016) while citing FAO narrates that the food security exist when all people at all times get sufficient safe and nutritious food. This is possible only with food from local plants. And in the light of the above discussions it can be said that with few locally available resources such as rice, black gram, coconut, jaggery, oil/*ghee*, varieties of *pitha* can be prepared by many and consumed by all on different occasions round the year providing sustainable and reasonable nutritious food.

Finally it may be concluded that *pitha*s or some kind of pancakes are prepared in Odisha from the locally available plant resources. These are not for self-indulgence but it teaches people to respect nature, Gods and Goddess. *Pithas* are offered every day to Lord Jagannath and also on different occasions. The *pitha*'s are offered either to Lord Shiva in *Badaosa* or sun god in *Samba Dashami* or to mango tree in *Bakulaamavasya* or to the cows and bullocks in *Gamha Purnima* or to the mollusks in the *Chitalagi Amavasya.* Similar offerings are made to other deities. It is also shared with near and dear ones and the needy who may not be able to afford to enjoy such delicacies. This is done through the age-old *Jajmani* system which still exists at rudimentary stage in rural Odisha.

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Has the Flag Ship Programme of India Met Its Vision in Reality? : AQualitative Study on Open Air Defecation among womenin Rural India*

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Abstract: India is a country where people living in the luxurious atomic age co-exist with people living like those of ancient Stone Age While we have made phenomenal progress in technology and infrastructure, still poor sanitation practice and unhealthy environment is proven to be continuing. The year when Swachh Bharat Mission, the flagship programme was launched, Kancheepuram district in Tamilnadu had scanty sanitation coverage of 55.96 %. Over the years, the district officials working under this mission have constructed over 1, 81,166 toilets and have declared the district "Open Defecation Free (ODF)" on February 27, 2018. While the ODF status was announced, the challenge of sustaining the status yet remained and on the contrary, other parallel surveys kept discrediting this status. This study focused on eliciting the determinants of Open Air Defecation (OAD) and if still persistent, it's perceived health effects and to draw suggestions for halting the practice by women respondents. A qualitative study was carried out in September 2019 in Asoor, a rural village in the district of Kancheepuram, after a multistage sampling. The guide comprised questions about Open Air Defecation (OAD), determinants, sanitation practice, perceived health, non- health, environmental and social effects. The guide also comprised questions to obtain personal recommendations by respondents on combating the practice (if existent). Focus group discussion (FGD) and 6 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted among students, leaders, adults and elderly women till data saturation was acquired. Regardless of the challenges, under the aid of UNICEF, UNDP, the central and state government, etc. the village made remarkable progress over the last few years in sanitation and reduction in number of open air defecators. However, following the study, multitude of favoring reasons for continuation of OAD were identified: lack/incomplete toilet structure, habitual, poor attitude towards latrine usage, comfort, occasion to be combined with walking/jogging, poor awareness about the ill effects of OAD and low economic status to maintain if owned/used toilet. Space constraint, incomplete structure and unsuitability for elderly/under five age group population were mentioned in particular, for the households who had subsidized toilets. Almost all the participants of the survey perceived contamination of water and soil apart from the transmission of illness like fever and common cold due to the practice. Through the survey we concluded with a concrete statement that a lot more is needed for adaptation of a proper sanitation practice than toilet construction and follow up. In order to achieve/sustain an ODF status and to attain the Sustainable Development Goals interventions should be clearly multidimensional. Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), efficient fund flow system, penalties for trespassers, converting OAD spots into recreational or agricultural fields, proper engineering, etc. were few of the recommendations drawn from the field study.

Keywords: *Swachh Bharat, open-air defecation, women, determinants, rural, sanitation practices*

List of Acronyms/Abbreviations

AWW -	Anganwadi worker
CCTV -	Closed Circuit Television
CLTS -	Community –Led Total Sanitation
DBT -	Direct Beneficiary Transfer
FGD -	Focus group discussion
IDI -	In-depth interview
GoI -	Government of India
IEC -	Information, Education and Communication
MNREGA-	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NBA -	Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan
NEFT -	National Electronic Funds Transfer
NSO -	National Statistical Office
OAD -	Open Air Defecation
OD -	Open Defecation
ODF -	Open Defecation Free
SBA -	Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
SBM -	Swachh Bharat Mission
SC -	Scheduled Class
SDGs -	Sustainable development goals
SHG -	Self Help Group
TSC -	Total Sanitation Campaign
UNICEF-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNDP -	United Nations Development Programme
WHO -	World Health Organization

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Introduction

Open air defecation refers to the practice whereby people go out in fields, bushes, forests, open bodies of water, or other open spaces rather than using the toilet to defecate (World Health Organization: 2018)

Dreamt by the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi to visualize an Open Defecation Free (ODF) motherland, various schemes and programmes were brought into force to try and use. Inspite of these rigorous and significant ventures taken by the Government of India, the unhygienic and filthy practice has managed to survive for centuries **(**Coffey, D and D Spears: 2017**).** Although many

studies were undertaken, the core reason for the continuation of the practice was left unknown and disturbing. Thus, allowing its manifestations to be difficult to remove. While two-thirds of open air defecators live in South Asia.India as a country holds the shameful highest position of harboring the largest number of open air defecators (UNICEF: 2018; WHO:2017).

It is never unknown what Open Air Defecation (OAD) results among humans, vast majority being the vulnerable group, animals and the environment on the whole. Commencing with grave health repercussions like fatal diarrheal diseases, acute respiratory infections, anemia, fever, UTI, viral infections, trachoma, snail fever, some water borne diseases and stunting among children, etc.(Emerson PM: 2001;UNICEF: 2018; WHO: 2017) to the psychological aspects like shame, faced with personal dignity and embarrassment along with the physical attacks and bites of insects etc. The list of vicious consequences seems unending and quite perceptible. Along with this, poor sanitation has wider and long term effects like loss of productivity, reduced life spans, economical burdens and even affecting generations to come (Pearson J: 2008).

Sanitation schemes

On 2nd October 2014 Government of India launched Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) with the help of partners like United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to have a very crucial eagle eye view on OAD. The prime target of this 'sacred mission' was to make India an 'Open Defecation Free country' by 2019 that would coincide with the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth. Considering the nation's poor sanitation coverage of 42% in 2014 (Census: 2011; National Institute of Urban Affairs: 2002),this mission started with a bold aim and implemented its plans with enthusiasm and determination. Though it wasn't a pioneer sanitation programme with latrine building as its prime mission, the scheme's budget was different for the better. The subsidy here for individual household latrine construction was more i.e., Rs 12,000/-, compared to Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan's (NBA) endeavour during the years 2012-2014, which sanctioned Rs 10,000/-.Total Sanitation Campaigns (TSC) during the years 2001-2011 was sanctioned Rs 4,500/-.Under the launch of the programme in 2017,the national sanitation coverage rose to 65% and later a large decline in rural household's OAD practice was recorded during 2019 (Gupta: 2019; Hueso, A, and B Bell: 2013). On October 2nd 2019, the centre declared 95% of the households in the country having access to toilets and declared it as ODF. However, The India Forum in2019 contradicted the ODF status as an inflated claim and stated that undoubtedly it required considerably many more years to be a reality and not just in papers (The India Forum, 2019). Likewise, this ODF status was contradicted by many forums and surveys (National Statistical Organization: 2019; The Hindu: 2019)

Sanitation in Kancheepuram

The district of Kancheepuram had poor sanitation coverage of 55.96% in the year SBM was launched (Water supply and sanitation: 2014). Over the span of 4 years, an astonishing number of 1.8 lakh toilets were built by the officials to make it ODF. Further, on understanding the crucial need to endure this status, it implemented a 3 tier monitoring system and uses of sanitation cards to have a close monitor on the regular usage of toilets. During the process, the identified dysfunctional toilets were also encouraged to be repaired and made functional (Karanvirsingh: 2018). This

qualitative study addresses women in age group of 13 years and above since they share almost the same household chores, reproductive characteristics and are subject to parallel health and social challenges. Also, women encounter violence and manifold health vulnerabilities as compared to men (Mahrukh, S: 2019). Asoor, a rural village in the district of Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu which was declared ODF on the 6th of March, 2018 was under scrutiny in this paper.

Further, parallel to these claims and declarations, the National Statistical Organization (NSO) carried out a survey at the same time frame as when Government of India declared the district's ODF status. Government of India claimed more than double the percentage (95%) of sanitation coverage at present than when SBA was launched. However, NSO disclaimed this assertion with a much below coverage of only 71% of the rural households in India having access to toilets. Tamilnadu, one of the states, which declared itself ODF beforehand (NSO: 2019), showed a gap of 37%, Thus, even though the ODF status is claimed, it remains uncertain and questionable, which in turn instigated a strong need for this study.

Objectives

Primary objectives:

- To understand the socio- cultural and economic determinants of practicing Open Air Defecation.
- To access the pattern of sanitary latrine usage.
- To determine the perceived ill health effects of Open Air Defecation.

Secondary objectives:

- To assess the factors contributing to non usage of latrines.
- To elicit the non- health effects due to Open Air Defecation.
- To develop feasible recommendations gathered from the respondents,necessary to sustain ODF statusor end OAD.

Methodology

With multitude of studies carried year in and year out on this immoral practice, this study was directed towards securing details on determinants and underlying factors for the continuation of the OAD by eliciting facts from women inhabitants in a rural village by inculcating In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Asoor, the selected study area in the district of Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, comprised of individuals of different age groups, gender, occupation and religion. According to census 2011, Asoor has 1,234 people out of which the female population was 625. Tamil is the native language and the female literacy rate was 29.6% (Census: 2011). The village falls in the border of Kancheepuram and Tiruvannamalai district. A maximum variation sampling method was incorporated after multistage sampling technique to yield maximum variations in perspectives and practices. In the month of September 2019, an initial questionnaire guide was prepared by rapport developing session and brainstorming. This was further under

scrutiny and a well formulated, yet flexible guide was developed bearing in mind the cultural differences and the objectives of the study. The guide focused on eliciting the sanitary practices, socio- cultural and economic determinants, perception of the health and non health effects due to OAD; knowledge and attitude towards safe sanitation and OAD; and personal recommendations to sustain ODF status or to halt the practice if still in existence. The guide was translated into the local language- Tamil and retranslated to English. The team collected data until saturation was achieved or till we reached a point where the participant response did not yield any new information.

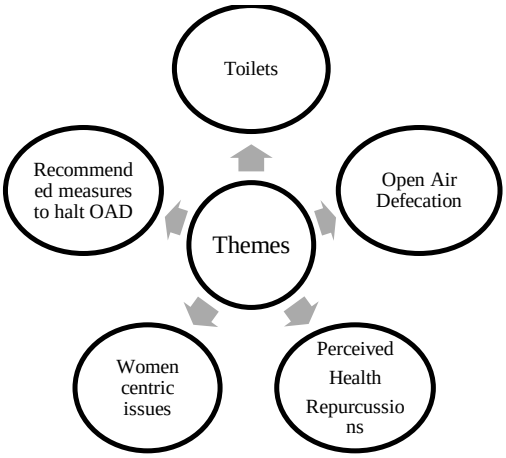
Focused Group Discussion was conducted among 8 women belonging relatively in the same age group and similar educational status. This was to maintain homogeneity and thereby to provide a non-threatening, non judgmental and dispute-free setting for open discussion. The In Depth Interview was carried out among groups of school students, college students, panchayat leaders, Anganwadi workers (AWW), and middle aged women both literate and illiterate. This was done with an intention to secure a wide range of responses. Both the focus group discussion and in depth interviews were carried out at convenient spots within the village. Time was previously set for the convenience of the selected voluntary participants. Oral consent was taken from each participant after explaining the significance of the survey. The group discussions and interviews were lead by a moderator and were recorded in a recorder by the second field investigator who also jotted down the emotional status and behavior of the participants during each question. This was executed for better understanding of the content and thereby to aid in theme development during analysis. Each IDI and FGD lasted for 20-35 minutes on an average. The data were later transcribed, coded and grouped into following subthemes and themes based on 'grounded theory'.

RESULTS

General demographics

As per the inclusion criteria, girls/women above the age of 13 years were included in the study. The age group ranged from 13 years being the lowest to 53 years being the highest. All the respondents belonged to Scheduled Class (SC). All the participants were Hindu's, which is also the dominant religion of the selected village. The educational status of the participants was intentionally chosen to be ranging from both the sides of the scale, illiterate to post graduate. The panchayat leader as well as a college student was chosen to bring out the maximum of opinions and sanitation preferences from both the ends of hierarchy and level of influence among the community. Similarly, marital status and food habits among the participants fell under different preferences. Acculturation in choice of occupation was perceptibly noticed since many preferred working in local companies for a monthly salary than as labour on daily wages or farming. Source of drinking water was river, lake and wells nearby.

Codes and sub- themes emerged from data analysis. These were further categorized into following five overarching themes:



THEMES

Toilets

Availability of toilets: Half of the respondents stated that they have toilets. The other half stated that they did not have toilet at home or the toilets were not functional. They were either structurally incomplete or there was no water supply. There were a few who built toilets on a priority basis without any financial aid from external sources. Majority of the respondents depended on aids from government, NGO's or political leaders. All the respondents would like to possess a toilet and use it.

A nursing student, while feeling helpless about the poor sanitation scenario in her village, mentioned, "Yes, It is an absolute necessity to build toilets at home. If we face any urgency at nights, it is not convenient to defecate in the fields" Similarly, a 14 year old school going girl strongly emphasized the necessity of owning a toilet. She said 'Yes, it is good to use toilet. When we build a toilet, my family and I will use it. Most of the houses here are huts, so it is not possible to build toilet" This refers to low economic status and lack of space. He also said that "In my street, only 2 houses have a completed and usable toilet". Similarly, a 34 year old educated woman grieved the absence of toilet saying, "using a toilet is a priority for me, but I am living here as a tenant and I am facing this issue of not having a toilet. I am left with no other option than to defecate in the field". This showed that education does not play a first-hand role in determining defecation practices.

A middle aged illiterate respondent seemed habituated in defecating in the open while she still believed toilet ownership is a basic necessity. She stated, "Some houses do and a few houses do not have toilets. We have a toilet in our house but we still cannot afford to build the septic tank and outlet system. For this reason we defecate in open". This showed the dysfunctional state of toilets. Correspondingly, an Angan Wadi Worker stated, "Toilet is available in my place but still we did

not build a septic tank. So we are not using it. Only half of the households here do have a toilet. Many do not use the toilet even if available."

Availing government aid: While owning a toilet seemed most desirable to all, poor financial status proves to be a hindrance for building toilets on a priority basis. Most of the respondents stated they are habituated in open air defecation are found to be comfortable with this unhygienic defecation practice.

A middle aged illiterate respondent revealed, "Villagers do not have a strong reason to build a toilet. People expect the government to sanction sufficient subsidy, if they want us to build a toilet". On the contrary, a 14 year old school student stated "Due to poverty we cannot afford to build a toilet. I don't know the reasons why others are not building but I earnestly desire to have one". People seem helpless but eager to have a proper sanitation system while they wait for government aid.

Though the scenario appears to have been better after the Sachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) mission, incomplete structure and a narrow space seems to be a block in its usage. The panchayat leader stated "Some houses have toilet. Some houses don't. But now many families have started to build toilets after government intervention. People will expect the government to build toilet for free due to their poverty." The Anganwadi Worker stated, "People may not have the money to build a toilet and people expect the panchayat to help. The subsidy given by government (Rs12,000/-) does not suffice the cost and we have to put our own money to build a complete structure". This revealed insufficient financial aid.

Perceived benefits: Almost all the respondents predominantly realized the benefits of owning and using toilets for defecation any time and in any season. Further, they also appreciated that in this way they could avoid insect bites, social discomfort like embarrassment/ shyness, which comes as a related consequences of OAD; controls the spread of diseases and maintains of the cleanliness of environment. Privacy and comfort were also widely stated as benefits.

A college going respondent stated, "If we have urgency at night, it is not possible to walk to the OAD sites. If we owned a toilet, we can use it at any time; we can avoid the bites of insects and snakes. We can even utilize it any time of the day". She went ahead and further stated that even the elders who generally do not prefer using the built toilet but they use the toilets during the rainy season.

The Anganwadi Worker (AWW), who also practices OAD because toilet at her home is not completed, said "Diseases can be prevented by using toilets. This is the main benefit".

An 18 year old respondent said "We can relieve ourselves whenever we have to. We can close the door and lock it from inside. We are afraid of men passing by the OAD sites."

While the benefits are realized by almost all the participants, on the contrary, a participant stated that there are no benefits of owning toilets. "I don't think there are any advantages of using toilets. Nothing else other than we do not have to walk to the OAD sites, which save time," stated the middle aged illiterate respondent.

Perceived detriment: Main detriments stated for inability to defecate in the toilet were stench, discomfort and maintenance expenses. Other detriments stated for inability to use government subsidized toilets were space constraints and lack of water facility.

A middle aged illiterate respondent stated, "It feels suffocating inside a narrow space in the toilet but OAD has good ventilation. I don't feel the urge to defecate when I decide to utilize the toilet", who later stated that she would avoid using toilets even when the toilet in her house is completed.

A college going respondent stated, "Actually we, the youngsters, are using toilets but our grandparents say it's uncomfortable for them as they are unable to sit on it". This reveals a different type of difficulty among a different age groups.

A middle aged lady said, "If we don't maintain the toilet it stinks and becomes breeding ground for mosquitoes. This is unhygienic for the members of the household."

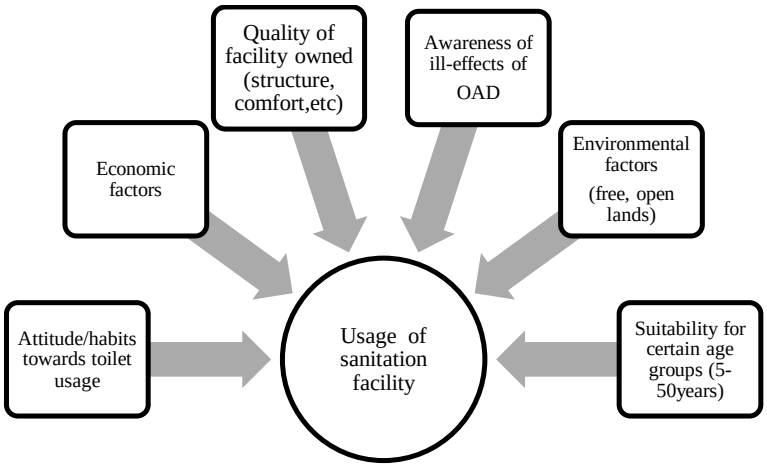
OPEN AIR DEFECATION (OAD)

Reasons for OAD: The lack of toilets at home was a major determinant, since these respondents actually had a seasonal preference for using toilets at least during rainy seasons and at night times. The respondents who defecated in the open and are without a toilet at home revealed that it is a strong and ingrained habit which they do not intend to give up.

The middle aged illiterate respondent said, "I shall use toilet for urgencies at nights" Who stated that the government should build a complete structure for toilet. Her daughters always prefer to use the toilet.

The panchayat leader expressed that finance was a major negative determinant for lack of toilets. "Everybody has the intention of building toilets. But they wonder where to get the money from! Even if they succeed, how will they repay the money? Some of the villagers are working for a monthly salary, while others are working as mere daily laborers; so I don't know how they will manage to build a toilet."

Reasons for OAD inspite owning toilets: Mainstream participants stated the following as the reason for OAD inspite of owning a toilet. Foremost, they are habituated to it. Other reasons are poor attitude towards toilet usage, in combination with relaxation, with walking/jogging, poor awareness about the ill effects of OAD and low economic status to maintain a built toilet. Attitude mentioned, towards the subsidized toilets, are space constraint, incomplete structure and unsuitability for elderly and younger children. These are the reasons for preference of OAD. A 34 year old woman respondent expressed that she would not change her practice of open air defecating even if the toilet is completely built by the government because she did not feel comfortable and did not see any benefit of using the toilet. This woman stated, "When I visit my mother's house, I use the toilet but here I don't like to use it" Her mother's place is in Chennai and she ends up by being forced to defecate in the toilet because there are no OAD sites in Chennai but she would not use toilet at her own place.



DETERMINANTS OF USING SANITATION FACILITIES

A college going respondent who owns and utilizes the toilet expressed "They (villagers) don't seem to understand the importance of having a toilet because they prefer OAD only. They don't mind defecating in the open and find that building a toilet is not necessary". This points to the lack of awareness about the benefits of toilets and shows resistance to change in behavior among the older generations in particular.

Another respondent said she would finish her household chores in advance so that she can walk to the OAD fields with her women friends or neighbors to socialize.

A 14 year old respondent said that they go for OAD for the sake of fun. They wake up at 6:00AM and feel the need for a walk and that is why they defecate in the open since the site takes 10 minutes to reach. The vital reason was to follow routine/habit.

On the other hand, women who hailed from a low economic household preferred using the toilet only in rainy season. This was perceived as a reason by a respondent who went on to say "They think of using it only during the rainy days since they feel if used every day it would lead to filling up of the septic tank and thus necessitated cleaning. On other days they defecated in the open. An elderly respondent said, "For my husband who is much elder than me, we made a chair and placed a paper beneath. After defecation, I clean it. This is the problem with elderly people. We don't find it comfortable and supportive in toilets."

Perceived benefits: A bulk of the respondents stated OAD to be a time for socializing, having physical exercise like walking, to relax and for proper ventilation.

This was quoted by AWW, "People go to open defecation in a group of two or three, talking together and walk to a spot which is within 500 to 1000mtrs from home. Thus they have ample time to meet and socialize with others. They enjoy that because they consider it as walking and as an exercise."

Perceived detriment: Roughly all the participants understood about the contamination of water and soil, apart from transmission of diseases, as the biggest detriments of OAD. A respondent also stated cutting trees down, deforestation, with the intention of providing more space for OAD as another detriment of OAD. They complained about the unpleasant odour and fly menace in and around the sites. They also felt distressed while mentioning the spread of diseases in case if the villagers tread on the feces unknowingly and reach home with it.

The AWW stated, "If we defecate in the farming lands, we may pollute it. Other than this, air pollution may also be caused". The 14 year old student said "Plants and soil get contaminated, because of OAD. Many trees were cut down just for the sake of OAD. People cut down and destroy good plants."

But, on the other end, a respondent was completely unaware of the possible damages. She stated "There are no potential glitches for the environment due to the practice of OAD."

Preferences

1. Sites- The preferred places for OAD were fields, river and lake sides, bushy areas, any deserted and secluded land.

Laughingly the Panchayat leader stated, "*(thoppu* or *kollamaedu*- in Tamil- defecation sites). They defecate near open grounds that are covered with trees.I think few people defecate nearthe lake also. Wherever the people find place to hide, they go and defecate."This was further confirmed by the middle aged illiterate respondent who said, "I defecate near the lake and on the open palm tree lands. But any open space can be utilized."

Further, the 14 year old student went on to say "Behind the temple there is an open ground (*maithanam*- in Tamil- open ground) on this side of the village, they defecate near the pond."

1. **Time-** The women generally preferred to wake up early (before 6:00AM) to defecate without the worry of being confronted by male members. They also mentioned their preference to defecate late after sunset for the same reason. Privacy and a relaxed state of mind while defecating were the two reasons behind this.

Perceived Health Repercussions

Common illness/diseases: A major proportion of the participants mentioned fever, vomiting, body pain and stomach ache as common health issues in their village. They informed of the incidents when which took place a few months back when a small group of villagers suffered from same health concerns, which was attributed to the rainy season, which lead to the stagnation of water which they consumed later. But, one of the sites mentioned as preferred for OAD were pond/lake side's which is also the source of drinking water and cannot be overlooked.

While many respondents did not agree to this possibility, a 14 year old respondent said, "Due to OAD during rainy season, lake water gets contaminated and that water comes to us for drinking. When I tried to tell this to others, no one listened because of my young age".

Effects due to OAD: Equal numbers of participants were both aware and unaware of the ill health effects of OAD. Those who were aware referred generally to the indirect means of transmission.

The 14 year old respondent expressed, "No health problems arise because of OAD directly. Only those who stepped on the stool may contract certain diseases." Panchayat leader further stated "If they trample stool by foot, fever and any other illness can be contacted." The AWW perceived "While walking without slippers, we may stamp the stool or urine because of OAD. The elderly people who might have wounds in their leg are liable to contract diseases easily. Likewise, children below 5 years will get affected easily than the elders."

Water borne illnesses were also considered by the panchayat leader who said "Many people fall ill because of rain or by consuming dirty water. Certain people even mentioned that people are vomiting and suffer from diarrhea".

On the other end, confidently disagreeing, the middle aged illiterate woman said, "OAD has nothing to do with ill effects on health."

Treatment seeking behavior: All the participants sought medical care when ill. Home remedies were used to treat minor health issues like flu and fever but such treatments are deteriorating in practice. Villagers had to travel 4 kms to Avalur, to avail of government health care service. Ambulance services were available at a call.

Panchayat leader said "After crossing the nearby village, Varadharajapuram, a government hospitalis present at Avalur. We follow home based treatment with products like Tulasi, karpooravalli, ginger, pepper, etc. for common cold alone. If it is not cured at home we seek care at the hospital. For such cases home remedies are followed only by few."

This was further confirmed by the middle aged lady who said "We don't try home remedies nowadays. We seek treatment at Avalur hospital"

Women Centric Issues:

Intimidation to privacy and dignity: All the respondents stated that they felt a substantial threat on their privacy and dignity. They expressed indignity in the search for a secluded space and withdrawal from the act, in case they find a man or vehicle approaching. They also expressed a subtle yet dreaded mind of being watched or encroached by the opposite sex during the act. Many respondents who defecated in the open said that in order to be free from worry, they have to find someone to accompany them to avoid the possible abuse or embarrassment.

The middle aged respondent said, "We feel like we are disturbing others and we also feel shy". Further, another middle aged educated respondent said "People walk around so it is disturbing both for us and for them. If anyone comes there we do feel afraid and ashamed."

The middle aged illiterate respondent disagreed to the claims of majority by saying "It has become a daily routine and we don't have any issues like shyness or fear."

Emotional and psychological stressors: The respondents mainly emphasized on the time taken to walk and search for a secluded space; risk for insect or other bites; supernatural encounters; sexual variables and facing unclean site. They also exemplified their preference to travel in groups or escorted by a relative as an extenuating approach because of the fear of being verbally, physically or sexually abused.

An elderly respondent said "I feel distressed and tired that I have to walk a long distance. It takes 15 minutes. If menstruating girls have to use the fields to OAD at night, they would be afraid of ghosts"

The AWW perceived "Since they used to defecate near the bushes, insect bites and mosquito bites are very common. They must be stressed for this."

Poor menstrual and excretion habits: For women in precise, in addition to the other health issues, poor menstrual and excretion habits take pace due to open defecation. Few of the respondents stated that during menstrual days toilets of other relations are used by them.

Panchayat leader said, "I heard when men pass through the site, women return to their house without defecating". This showed the withdrawal from the act abruptly and carrying out poor excretion habits.

AWW disclosed the inconvenience during menstrual days in her statement, "It is difficult but we can't help it (Laughing). We have to go for defecation in the open only. My sister's house is here and she has her own toilet. I will use that and so do my girl children during the menstrual days. We walk back home to wash ourselves. Previously we even used to throw the sanitary napkins in the OAD site."

The middle aged illiterate woman said, "During menstruation we prefer to defecate in dark hours". Daylight creates additional stress for defecation during menstrual days in particular.

Incidents: The ft and physical abuse are the two incidents reported by two different participants. The rest of the participants stated that there are less or no chances of such cases because male members defecate at a different spot. It was also recorded that OAD is seen as a normal and casual act which does not invite unprecedented incidents. Sexual violence was experienced by unmarried women.

The 14 year old school student said confidently, "One girl with retarded brain capacity was raped while defecating in the open. Many boys and men under the influence of alcohol abused her. It happened only once. Likewise, theft also has happened here. The neighbor of the village leader was searching for her lost cow. At that time, she was robbed of her chain. Complaint was lodged with the police station. So sometimes we do feel afraid"

Recommended Measures for Halting Oad

Individual/community measures: Participants stated that education and constant motivation has to be combined with self realization by individual's in order to end OAD. The

individuals with a positive attitude and awareness are expected to spread the knowledge to those within their household, peers and neighbors and by acting as an example.

A well-educated middle aged woman said, "We all should spread the benefits of using toilets to others whom we know. Government is doing what is possible from their part but people should realize and start using it"

The 14 year old said, "We all got to start a strike and protest against this practice."

Awareness programmes: Creating awareness and spreading good knowledge by executing periodical government initiated programmes were recommended.

But the AWW said, "When awareness programs are conducted, the people are only laughing and they forget the usefulness of using toilets by the end of the programme. Even then, we continue to educate them and now people started building toilets. We spread awareness by visiting every single house here. People have to change by themselves. Self discipline and hygiene should be a priority for every individual". Thereby individual measures and self realization should be insisted as paramount and grave issue along with awareness programmes.

Government/legislative measures: Respondents have recognized the sufficient measures undertaken by the government to directly or indirectly combat and end this practice. Apart from the officials appointed under SBA mission, Anganwadi centres have been reported as locations for discussion on the ill effects of OAD for individuals and others for all the mothers who visit the centre.

On the other end, almost all the participants insisted on adequate toilets to be constructed with the proper layout, with space and completed structure which includes septic tank, door and water supply. They stated allowances to be increased accordingly and sanctioned in advance as the poor financial situation is the chief determinant of unavailability of toilets at households.The policy can be directed towards negative tactics like offering job opportunity, only if toilets are constructed and used.

The panchayat leader said, "Due to lack of money toilet construction is stopped halfway in many houses"

The college student said, "Some don't own a toilet. They find it difficult to spend the initial cost of building on their own and they expect it to be done absolutely free of cost by the government without any initial down payment and extra cost during the process of construction. Government has built toilets only for few houses here. In my lane it is built for three houses. My household still doesn't use it since its incomplete"

The 14 year old perceived "Previously they stated that 100days job (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act- MNREGA) could not be availed, unless they built a toilet. So the same measure can be stated to make them use the toilets too."

The AWW stated "In panchayat, firm rules should be implemented against the practice of OAD. Penalties can be imposed for trespassers."

The middle aged lady said "In future if every open place where we generally defecate is changed into buildings or plots, then we have to use toilet only."

Discussion and conclusion

Mushahidullah Khan**,** Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change said, "Overcoming sanitation and hygiene crises is the most vital developmental challenge in South Asia. Tackling it will reduce unnecessary deaths, facilitate people to live a more dignified life, improve gender equality, help reduce poverty and protect the environment."

Good sanitation is a proven aspect and underlying determinant for achieving various health indicators like reduced mortality, morbidity, better child growth and overall development (WHO:2019).Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were laid down side by side with 17 goals at its pivot to guarantee peace and prosperity for mankind with a sustainable environmental wellbeing and poverty eradicated by 2030. Poor sanitation results in deteriorating and annihilating all positive health outcomes along with psychological and significant social issues (UNDP: 2015). Open defecation is a major contributor to this. A nation falls well short from being called 'developed' unless and until access to good sanitation methods and environmental sanitation are available with ease (Cairncross S: 2010).

Regardless of the challenges, India and other South Asian countries have made remarkable progress over the last decade in sanitation and reduction in number of open air defecators under the aid of UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the central and state government etc., However, in our survey, multitude of reasons favoring for OAD were identified; such as, strong individual and cultural preferences, lack of toilets or incomplete infrastructure and poor socio economic status for construction or/ and maintenance (Bhatt N: 2019: Britto R:2018; Saleem M 2019;SwarnapriyaVasudevan: 2020).It was openly proclaimed to be still practiced with majority of them striving for a better scenario and certain of them proving to be unapologetic and comfortable with the practice, taking our hopes down the drain (Aashish G:2019).Thus, this study discredits the ODF status in this district as the NSO survey did. In our study, the economic factor stands as half of the main reasons for the continuation of the practice, such as, to build, maintain and to repair the toilets. The other half of the reason is the residents' comfort, easy access to OAD sites, way of socializing and a deep rooted habit. Households are expected to raise the initial funds needed to build the toilet and are later reimbursed within six months being the least time frame. Furthermore, those who owned toilets subsidized by the Government of India, gave reason for not using toilets as, lack of ventilation, narrow space, poor lightings, incomplete structure, unfinished door, roof and outlet system and being unsuitable for elderly and children.

Only a negligible number of respondents were aware of some of the possible ill health outcomes, namely, fever, chances of trampling of the feces and spreading infection, increased risk for the vulnerable population and respiratory issues. Even, a strong debate was made by a respondent who denied any possible ill health effect and stated it is completely safe to defecate in the open. Unlike the physical ill health effects, all the respondents were aware of the psychological, social and environmental effects due to OAD. The women centric issues stated were poor menstrual hygiene and excretion habits (Britto R: 2018).

Thus, through the survey we conclude with a concrete statement that a lot more than toilet construction and follow up is needed for adaptation of a proper sanitation practice(Vyas S: 2019).Even though acculturation and modernization were seen in food, clothing and employment choices, sanitation habits have not changed in many residents of the village.

Suggestions drawn from the site

Any measure taken towards prevention of OAD should be focused on common factors, like culture and individual behaviors because changing a deep routed practice can be difficult. Some approaches are suggested below.

1. Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Approach: Health education on benefits of toilet usage, remove the myths linked with toilet usage, long term repercussions, where to approach for paper work in SBA, etc. These arenecessary for communication to the SHG members, political leaders and influential local elders. On-field training should be implemented and strengthened for the ground level monitors and supervisors, who hail from the particular village or sector. The selected individuals can purposefully be women since time and again they have proved to be the motivators for better sanitation practices in households (GWPP: 2018).The budget allocated for Information, Education and Communication (IEC) under SBA can be raised up to 15%. Alongside with that, yet another secret supervisor for the ground level staffs is vital. This will act as a stringently implemented managerial aspect.

2. Efficient fund flow System: Reimbursement should reach the beneficiary at the earliest in both the installments. Direct Beneficiary Transfer (DBT) as adopted in Agra, India, may be taken as an example for a smooth and hitchless money transfer. In that case the beneficiary details are submitted to the bank and fund transfer takes place via National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT). Further, for a better and more prompt toilet construction, the first installment can be released before the initial construction begins as it would not only act as a catalyst in the process but also develop a mutual trust with the civilians and the government. With such an implementation, the local officials could be appointed for proper follow up on the usage of the cash by hiring the right constructors and collecting the receipts. On the other hand, the allowance can also be increased so as to completely cover the expenses of a bigger and spacious toilet.

3. Penalties: Since, in many cases toilets are available but not used, penalties can be enforced where individuals, if found defecating in the open, will be held at a risk of cancelling the BPL cards or penalized Rs.500/- by the local officials or by staffs selected within the village to monitor and overlook at the common OAD sites. The villagers should be notified 2 to 4 weeks prior to introduction of this force. Which may also motivate them to use the time span and build/complete a toilet.

4. Converting the OAD spots into recreational or agricultural fields: As stated by a respondent, OAD continues since there is an ever present opportunity like open fields and deserted sites. Recreational spots like parks, museum, playing grounds, etc. can be constructed in OAD sites. OAD sites can also be converted into agricultural fields and promote a comeback of

traditional occupations and a way of livelihood. Water bodies can be barricaded or installed with Closed Circuit Television (CCTV camera) to act as a constant monitor.

5. Employment opportunities reserved to owners and users of toilets: MNREGA job opportunities are of high demand post pandemic and will ultimately stay on a rise. This can be utilized towards the advantage of our motive and demand toilet construction, and usage as criteria to avail the job. Furthermore, those employees can also be used in the construction and completion of the toilets. The labour cost for construction of toilets as part of the SBA mission can be diverted towards them. Thus this would act as a way of employment and also as an indirect incentive for using toilets.

6. Suitable construction of structure of toilets/ proper engineering: Another major part of the reason for continuation of OAD is their inability to squat and inconvenience of the structure. As age is accompanied with illnesses and pains, the elderly find it inconvenient. Improper support within the small confinement is yet another reason which inculcates fear of fall within the toilet. The same reasons stand true for children. Hence, a larger structure with a more convenient or added commodity, such as, mobile commode, can be additional in households with elderly or children. Doors with working latches and closed roofs are also vital.

7. Building community toilets: Community toilets can be deemed as a solution in areas where houses are single roomed and clearly lack space within or outside for building a toilet. This can also be considered further more when the house is rented and the tenant's desireof building toilet solely lies with the owner of the house. A suitable site within the village, with proper maintenance plan and water facility should be ensured.

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Photos



Photo 1- Site used for Open Air Defecation



Photo 2- Site used for Open Air Defecation by women



Photo 3- Unused and incomplete subsidized toilet



Photo 4- Unused subsidized toilet used as a store room



Photo 5- Completed and maintained subsidized toilet

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Citizenship, Cross-border Migration and India's foreign Policy A Paradigm shift: Assessment of the Rohingya Crisis.

[1]Sumit Kumar Minz and [2]Roshni Kujur

Abstract: India's foreign policy towards refugees has always been welcoming in nature since India got independence in 1947. But India's stand is different in case of stateless Rohingya, which is also criticised by the global community. Rohingya Community is one the ethnic minority groups living in Myanmar, a Buddhist majority nation. They have been facing persecution by their government through various forms since Myanmar got independence from British colonial rule. Time and again Rohingya have been fleeing from their dwelling place to the various parts of the world, particularly to Asian nations. India considers the Rohingya as illegal migrants and a threat to the internal security of the country. Whereas. International Organisations and especially western countries have been continuously pressurising Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya issue. But India never interfered into the matter of Myanmar, as it looks like India does not want to disgruntle Myanmar for a healthy bilateral interest. The paper intends to study the foreign policy for Refugees in contemporary India in general and Rohingya issue in particular. It also analyses the Citizenship Act of India in giving a scope to the stateless communities.

Keywords: *Citizenship, Cross-border Migration, Foreign Policy, Refugee, Rohingya, CAA,NRC*

Introduction

After the end of colonialism, a number of Independent nation states came into existence with different political ideology to nourish the newly independent state. These third world countries required a foreign policy that would guide to build up a healthy relationship and interaction with other realms. Foreign policy is an activity of the State with which it fulfils its aims and interests within the international arena. A state without a foreign policy has been compared to a ship in the deep sea without any knowledge of directions. Majority of international relations scholarship define foreign policy as "the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations (Hill 2003: 3)."Leopold von Ranke, a political historian of nineteenth century put emphasis on primacy of geography and external threats in framing foreign policy, whereas later scholars emphasized on various domestic factors of a state. Calvert defines the concept of foreign policy as decisions and activities which largely concern relations between one State and the others (Calvert 1986: 1). Foreign policy of any independent nation always reflects its national interests that need to be achieved by making appropriate policy within its international relation milieu. It is highly influenced by both external and domestic factors taking into consideration. India, as a democratic set up of governance, has been making its foreign policy so to

fulfil its hegemonic interests and to have a wealthy bilateral and multilateral relation with the rest of the world, and particularly in South Asia.

There has been a flow of irregular cross-border migration to India from its neighbouring countries mainly due to various ethnic conflicts since decades. In this regard, India'spolicy was quite clear of raise it's helping hands to the people in distress and adopts them as refugee. But with the change of time India seems to have changed its old nature of welcoming people as refugees in the country. One burning example can be felt on the stand of Indian government on Rohingya community, a minority ethnic group of Myanmar (erstwhile Burma). India considers Rohingya as illegal migrants, who are a threat to the internal security, which was never in the case of any migrants that entered India due to ethnic conflict and persecution before. Critics look it as bias of Right Wing ideological government of BJP towards a persecuted and suppressed community, majority of whom, are the followers of Islam, a Sunni Muslim community. Continuously,an accusation has been made onthe prejudice attitude towards the Muslim community of the country, since the BJP government came to power in 2014. Critics find it clearly visible in the policy of the government, carrying the burning example of Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, which closes the door for Muslims to take citizenship in India. Today, the Rohingya issue has become flash point of attention for the international community as a whole and the India's foreign policy toward refugee have been questioned in international platform.

Cross-Border Migration

Migration is universal and a growing phenomenon in the global society, a reality of human being that has been taking place with the origin of mankind. With the evolution of nation states boundaries have been made to protect the liberty and rights of the citizens living within the territorial boundary. Time and again people cross the territorial border due to different social, economic, political and technological transformation that affects a wide range of high priority policy issues. International migration is the result of significant global events like revolution, wars, and the rise and fall of empires which is associated with the change in economic expansion, nation building and political transformation. These significant changes subsequently give birth to conflicts, persecution and dispossession resulting into cross-border migration of individuals (Koser 2016: 5). It can be both legal and illegal depending upon the perception of the host nation. According to the data provided by the World Migration Report of 2020, there are around 272 million migrants worldwide, which is 3.5 per cent of the total population of the world. Previously it was around 150 million in the year 2000, which was 2.8 per cent of the total global population (IOM 2019). This figure indicates a massive increase of cross border migration over a period of time, which is also a matter of concern for the global community as it affects the different aspects of sovereign nation states. According to the report Asia hosts a highest of around 84 million global migrants whereas Europe account for the second highest of 82 million international migrants. Both the continent alone host almost 61 per cent of the total global migration stock (IOM 2019).

India is one of the most populous countries of Asia, which is constantly dealing with the issue of cross-border migration. The country shares its boundary with seven countries through land and coast. The principle reason of constant migration from its neighbouring states to the territory of India looks to be more for the socio-economic reasons. A huge population from the neighbouring

countries often cross the border to get a better employability and livelihood. But this is only one side of the coin, the other side of reason for cross-border migration is much complex and miserable. It is not voluntarily but as a result of various unpleasant development that took place within the territorial boundary of the neighbouring states. The saga of mass movement of people can be traced down from the partition and creation of two nation states (India and Pakistan) in 1947, which witnessed a two way massive involuntary cross-border migration in the human history. Furthermore, India also witnessed a huge moment of people from time to time to due to the ethnic clashes that took place in its neighbouring countries, mostly in 20th century, starting from Tibetan refugees in 1960 to Rohingya asylum-seekers in 21st century. All these involuntary migration have been a matter of great concern not only for the government but also for the people of India at different period of time.

The Stateless Rohingya

The origin history of Rohingya community has always been in controversy and it has a contrasting narrative, one from Rohingya minority and another from the Buddhist government of Myanmar. Rohingya claim that they lived in Rakhine region of Myanmar much before the arrival of Islam during late 8th century and their culture and language was dominant during the rule of Mrauk U Dynasty from 15th to 19th century. The people of Myanmar, majority are Buddhist with different perspective. They strongly believe that Buddhists were in majority during Maruk U Dynasty and Islam had a very low representation. Moreover, they claim that the modern Rohingya are not the descendants of a small number of Muslims who lived in Rakhine before British colonialization. Rather, they are Bengali migrants, who came after Britishers conquer Rakhine state (Tanenbaum 2017). There have been arguments among scholars regarding the origin of Rohingya community on basis of facts and interestingly, both the narratives have facts to support some of their claims. However, most of the scholars believe that Rohingya are the amalgamation of people.

The status of Rohingya community was quite stable during colonial rule as they took the side of Britishers and even fought Guerilla war against the Japanese who were supported by Burman Buddhist. Rohingya wanted to make Rakhine an independent state and letter tried to join East Pakistan (Bangladesh). But their entire attempt could not bear fruit and Rakhine remained as an integral part of independent Burma (Tanenbaum 2017). The process of persecution of Rohingya community had already been started which was clearly reflecting in the policies formulated after Burma got independence from British colonial rule in 1948. Their identity came into danger after the enactment of 1982 Citizenship Act., which expelled their citizenship in their own homeland. Rohingya were not included among 135 ethnic communities of Myanmar (Blakemore 2019). This denial of citizenship dragged them to the hole of statelessness in the world.

The seed of hatred between Rohingya Muslims and Buddhist was sawn long back, by the Britishers during colonial rule in order to successfully rule over the country. Britishers went back, but the tension and conflict between both the communities went on increasing with the time. Rohingya community has faced decades of state sponsored systematic discrimination, statelessness and targeted violence in Myanmar, a land of Buddhist majority nation. There have been significant spikes of violent attacks on Rohingyas in1978, 1991-1992, 2012, 2016 and recently in 2017(OCHA nd.).As a result of continuous ethnic cleansing a large number of Rohingya population have fled to

different countries of the world. According to different agencies it is estimated that a highest of 890,000 Rohingya have taken shelter in Bangladesh, followed by 350,000 and 40,000 in Pakistan and India respectively. Besides, they also have a huge population settled in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia (Aljazeera 2018). It is estimated that less than 1 million Rohingya are staying in Myanmar with fear and anxiety.

An estimate of around 800,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh during 2016 to 2017, bringing accounts of genocide, rape and arson done by the Myanmar Army. This cruel action was made on response to two separate waves of attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya militant group, killing nine soldiers and 12 officers at border guard posts. Despite of producing a number of evidence and proofs, the Myanmar government has been in denial mode to the action of atrocity made by their Army. The Gambia, a small West African country had filed a case on behalf of Organization of Islamic Cooperation in International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar on 11November 2019 for Myanmar's military brutal campaign against the Rohingya in August 2017 and violating the 1948 Genocide Convention **(**Choudhury 2020).Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who spent over a decade fighting against the Burmese military was defending the country and had asked the court to drop the genocide case against Myanmar. The International Court of Justice (ICJ)on 23 January 2020 ordered Myanmar to "take all measures within its power" to prevent the genocide and to protect Rohingya Muslim minority. The court also indicated four specific "provisional measures" in this regard and ordered Myanmar to report regularly to the tribunal about its progress (Brody 2020).

Understanding Citizenship

Citizenship can be defined as a relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection. Citizenship implies the status of freedom and certain rights with accompanying duties and responsibilities that are only extended to the citizens residing in a state. Historically, citizenship has been linked to the privileges of membership of a particular kind of political community, one in which those who enjoy a certain status are entitled to participate on an equal basis with their fellow citizens in making the collective decisions that regulate social life (Bellamy 2008: 1).

Part II of the Indian constitution (Article 5 to 11) defines citizenship and deals with its related affairs, although there is no definition to the term "Citizen" in the constitution. Articles 5 to 9 of the Constitution define citizenship at its commencement. The constitution also provides for a single citizenship for the entire country. In addition, Article 11 of the Indian constitution authorise the government to make laws pertaining to acquisition and termination of citizenship. Accordingly the parliament enacted the citizenship Act of 1955, specifying how citizenship can be acquired by birth, descent, naturalization, registration and through incorporation of territory. However, it does not talk about the stateless individual who is recognised as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to the Indian constitution (Article 5 to 8) the following categories of people got the citizenship at the date of the commencement of the constitution:

1. *Those domiciled and born in India;*
2. *Those domiciled, not born in India but either of whose parents was born in India;*
3. *Those domiciled, not born in India, but ordinarily resident in India for more than five years;*

4. *Those resident in India, who migrated to Pakistan after 1 March 1947 and returned later on resettlement permits;*
5. *Those resident in Pakistan, who migrated to India before 19 July 1948 or those who came afterwards but stayed on for more than 6 months and got registered;*
6. *Those whose parents and grandparents were born in India but were residing outside India.*(Roy 2016: 11-12)

The original Citizenship Act of 1955 has been successfully amended in 1986, 1992, 2003, 2005, 2015 and the most recent and the controversial amendment in 2019.

CAA and NRC

The recent Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019, on the existing Citizenship Act, 1955, is been widely questioned not only within the country but also by the international community. This amendment seek to provide citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians facing religious persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. This provision clearly reflects about the grant of citizenship to the Hindus fleeing persecution in Muslim-majority countries of neighbouring India. This was also one among the promises made in the election manifesto of the present ruling government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Critics have argued that the CAA violates the judicial precedent, international law and the basic principles and spirit of secular values of the Indian constitution. Indeed, it also violates the Article 14 of the constitution, which promises "Equality as a fundamental right to every individual" and discriminate the persecuted people of a particular religion. The government argue that the new citizenship amendment is been introduced to provide a permanent shelter, which revolves around the idea of religious persecution of religious minorities in these Muslim countries. If religious persecution is the central basis of the amendment, it is to be noted that Jews and atheists are from these three Muslim majority countries and Ahmadiyya in Pakistan are also not included in this CAA (Kamdar 2020).Moreover, the amendment discriminates with the persecuted persons of the non-Muslim majority neighbouring countries like Tamils from Sri Lanka and Rohingyas from Myanmar. Intellectuals see such development in Indian democracy as an attempt to make a road map for the creation of a *Hindu Rastra* by a Hindu nationalist party, presently who is in power.

NRC has been introduced in India to identify the illegal migrants living in India and to deport them. People were asked to prove their disentrance of Indian citizenship by showing legacy data and the lineage, in order to get registered on the NRC. But the problem is that a large section of Indian population are illiterate or ignorant, which may failed to produce necessary documents to prove their citizenship. Moreover, there has been a flow of natural disaster at different parts of the country from time to time, which may cause the loss of governmental document that is necessary for NRC. This sparked another protest and a Pan-India campaign with a slogan of *"Kaagaz nahi Dikhayenge"* (we will not show our papers) (Raj 2020: 33).Besides, a lot of miss management has been seen in the process of NRC, where it is been conducted in the nation. Further, it is felt that The NRC has been brought with an intention of preventing Muslim immigrants specially from acquiring certain rights and benefits in India. It can be argued that CAA and NRC have been introduced and used as a political tool to identify Muslim community living in India and to deny shelter to the

Muslim asylum seekers like Rohingya. It is also unclear that what will be done with the people who fail to prove their citizenship in India (especially Muslims), as they can't be deported to any other South Asian countries due to lack of arrangements and resources. Further this will lead to intensify the vulnerability of already persecuted and stateless community like Rohingya Muslims.

A nationwide voice has been raised across different educational campus and across different streets against the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and The National Register of Citizens (NRC).In response, the government has invoked section 144 in many places and had shut down internet followed by detaining and arresting thousands of protesters across the country to put down the voice of the people. Many stalwarts of the Modi, led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have called the protestors anti-nationalist. Some ministers like Anurag Thakur, the junior finance minister of India, have called for "these traitors of the nation" to be shot. Soon after few days of the statement of Anurag Thakur, two gunmen openly fired at the protesters, one outside the Jamia Millia Islamia University on 30 January 2020 and another at women led protest at Shaheen Bagh on 2 February 2020 (Kamdar 2020). The government seems to have remained stubborn with its decision and to have no interest to listen to the queries of the people relating to the recent amendment of Citizenship.

Foreign Policy towards Refugees since Independence

India has been a shelter to the people of neighbouring states, whenever their life is in threat. History has witnessed several events of mass movement of people towards India in order to protect their life and dignity. India has always been generous and altruistic towards the people seeking help in distress.

In 1950s, the Chinese government made an attempt to Liberalise Tibet by attacking on the distinct culture of Tibetian and forcibly imposition of Chinese Marxist ideology and socio-political culture upon them, who practice and preach Tibetan Buddhism. After a failed revolt, Dalai Lama (the spiritual leader) along with thousands of Tibetans came to India in 1959, to protect their life and to save their culture and identity. By the end of 1960, a number of more than 100,000 Tibetans arrived in India via Nepal, beating the most perilous journey through Himalayas (Mehra 2020). The government of India immediately granted them asylum and relief operations were launched. They were settled in different parts of the country with basic facilities including education. Today, India is a home to around 94,203 Tibetan refugees resides in 39 major and minor settlements, out of total 128,944 Tibetan worldwide. They are also eligible to get Indian citizenship upon the fulfilment of conditions set by the government of India. Tibetan refugees are considered as the 'most successful' refugee community in the world (Choedon 2018).

Indian faced another massive movement of people, both Hindus and Muslims from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) due to the brutality and atrocities made by the Pakistan Army in 1971. By the end of the year nearly 10 million people had arrived in Indian Territory with agonizing memories within their heart. It created an extraordinary problem in India and was a challenge for the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi leading Indian government, as India did not have the resources to handle such a massive population of refugees. In spite of that the Indian government was concerned for the suddenly arrived guests and sought the help of international community to make necessary arrangements. The then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi stated in Lok Sabha that a number of 330

camps had been established across Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya for the refugees came from East Pakistan. Although, India was economically not strong enough, it gave shelter to East Pakistan's refugees and played a very significant role in the creation of Bangladesh (Manuvie 2019).

Again India gave shelter to Sri Lanka's Tamil asylum seekers, the victim of Black July Riots of 1983 and the civil war that erupted during 1980s and 1990s. Almost one third of them are Hindus and the rest are Christians. All came from the conflict-affected areas of Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces. This group is the second highest refugee groups in India. Almost 65,000 Sri Lankan Tamils were settled by the government of India in 133 camps in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Besides, an estimate of around 40,000 refugees lives outside the government refugee camps. Both the government of India and the state of Tamil Nadu has been providing them assistance like free water and electricity, ration, monthly cash grant etc. However, they also receive support and grants from self-help group, the Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR), funded by various international Organisations (Saha 2004).

Another wave of asylum seekers came right from Afghanistan, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Afghan refugees continued migrating to the different parts of the world. A massive population walked out during Civil War in 1990s when Taliban took control over the country. Both Hindu and Sikh Afghans continued heading towards Indian Territory in subsequent years in search of asylum. According to the UNHCR report of 2016, a number of 14,464 Afghan refugees are registered in India, majority of them are Sikhs. They are settled in North India, mainly around the refugee camps situated in New Delhi, the capital of India, where Somali refugees are given shelter (Chauhan 2018). As per UNHC Report of 2006, 13 Afghan refugees out of which 12 are Hindus and Sikhs are granted with naturalised Indian citizenship (Bose 2006). This led to a ray of hope for the Afghan refugees residing in India for more than 12 years.

India has traditionally adhered to the policy of non-refoulement since independence though it doesn't possess a domestic legal framework for refugees. But in recent times; the foreign policy of India towards refugees seems to have taken a different shift. In the case of Rohingyas, Indian Ministry of Home Affairs has labelled them "illegal immigrants," accused them of posing a national security threat, which was never the stand of India towards any other asylum seeker groups in the history (Kamdar 2018). Instead, the government is in a denial mode of raising a helping hand toward the world's largest stateless ethnic community. Furthermore, a stigma of Islamic terrorism has been labelled the Rohingya community which made them looked upon suspicious.

Status of Rohingya in India:

The status of Rohingya in India is different and much vulnerable from other asylum seekers that came to India at different period of time. In India, Rohingya are not treated as a vulnerable community struggling to protect their life, rather an illegal immigrants and a community of terrorists that may be a threat to the internal security (just like the Myanmar government does).As of now, there are around 40,000 Rohingya Muslims staying within the territory of India. Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju stated that there are about 10,500 Rohingya Muslims who have taken shelter in different parts of the country. Maximum of them are in Jammu and Kashmir numbering around 6,684, 1,775 in Andhra Pradesh (mainly in Hyderabad), 760 in Delhi, 677 in Haryana, 351 in West Bengal, 162 in Rajasthan, 111 in Uttar Pradesh, 50 in Punjab, 12 in

Maharastra and 3 in Andaman and Nicobar Island (Velath and Chopra 2018: 76). The government however, estimates that the population could be more as estimated by different sources. According to the latest data of UNHCR, a number of 18,914 Rohingya are currently registered with UNHCR in India. The stand of Indian government has been crystal clear, as the Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju made it clear that all Rohingyas are illegal migrants in India, whether registered with United Nations Human Rights Commission or not (Dutta 2017). Such attitude of the government not only goes against the international laws but also against the humanitarian sentiment.

It is also accused that an Anti-Rohingya sentiment has been created in India, as majority of them follow Islam. Indeed, the track record of the present government regarding the attitude toward the minorities has been not so convincing, particularly towards the Muslim community, after the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came into power in 2014.It is observed that over less than a decade, the Hindu-nationalist government and its supporters have dramatically succeeded in eroding the most of the basic fundamental rights of the Rohingya refugees, including access to work, education, shelter, sanitation, healthcare, and basic human dignity, which is easily accessible to the other refugees settled in the country (Kinseth 2019).Majority of critics look it as an anti-Muslim sentiment of the present Indian government. It also reflects in the policies formulated by the government of India to some extent. For instance, the recent 2019 amendment in Citizenship Act 1955 disappoints the Muslim communities coming from the neighbouring countries, as their little hope for getting citizenship in India is closed with this new amendment.

Exigency for a Refugee Law:

Despite of being not a signatory of 1951 United Nations Convention of Refugees and its protocol which was signed by 145 countries of the world, India has a track record of being a home to asylum seekers. History has witnessed that India has been receiving a high asylum seekers from time to time. Due to the absence of Refugee laws, all the refugees and asylum seekers coming to India are brought under the umbrella of "Illegal Migrants". But, India's response to these refugees and asylum seekers differs from one refugee group to another. On one hand India becomes so soft and generous to one refugee group, while on the other hand India becomes strict and ruthless to other. For instance, the refugees from Tibet were even allowed to form an exile government in India. Whereas the Rohingya Community is treated as a threat to the national security and are kept under high surveillance (Kamdar 2020). Since India doesn't have any formal legal framework, all the refugee related affairs in India are dealt by Foreigners Act 1946 which highlights the ad hoc nature of refugee law and practice in India. Further, it also fails to define refugee as a class of persons and their status, rights and entitlements (Bhattacharjee 2008: 71). This gap in policy making has resulted into the arbitrary asylum policy in India. Indeed, India has not only recognised the rights to refugee and non-refoulement but also a signatory to numerous human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948, International Convention on Civil and Political Rights 1966, etc, which demands an obligation to secure to refugees a right to status (Raj 2020: 34). Yet, India seems to have failed to provide basic entitlement and humanitarian protection due to the lack of a specific domestic refugee law, as observed particularly in the case of Rohingya.

Concluding Remarks:

No doubt, it's been a challenge for India to control the cross-border migration, yet the government of India also needs to take account of the people who are persecuted by their state. A paradigm shift has been observed in India's foreign policy over a period of less than a decade. The discriminative attitude of the government towards a particular community through CAA and NRC has created several problems and discontent among its own citizens. Further, this recent initiatives of the government looks more problematic in identifying the illegal immigrants, rather disappoints the citizens of the nation who are unnecessarily pissed up in this process. The absence of a national law on protection, rights, and entitlements of refugees has resulted in the denial of basic protection and has further pushed them into a condition of vulnerability, especially in the case of Rohingya. Indeed, there is a need of a specific refugee laws in India, which can deal with all the refugee related affairs and treat the entire asylum seekers equally. In general, India needs to make a genuine attempt to formulate policies as per the international standard to have a qualitative bilateral and multilateral relationship.

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Gender Preference and Culture Construct in a Matrilineal and a Patrilineal Society: A Study in Alipurduar District, West Bengal

Suchismita Sen Chowdhury

Abstract: Gender is guided by the social norms and values. The concept of gender is often community specific. It depends on the social organization. Gender roles are the product of cultural construct. The status of man and woman significantly varies in a patrilineal and a matrilineal society. The present study on gender preference was done among the Mech, a patrilineal tribe and Rabha, a matrilineal tribe of West Bengal, India. The aim of this study was to find out the perception of the men and women of these two different kinds of societies regarding gender. How tradition and modernity in influencing the gender role and decision-making process has been observed. The study has been done on hundred respondents, fifty from each community. Data was mainly collected through individual and group level interviews. It was found that descent rule is the most important contributing factor for gender preference. Female are given priority in matrilineal society, while male gets prominence in patrilineal society. The change has been observed in the decision-making process. In both the societies' decision regarding economic and family matters are taken jointly. The reason for women's participation in important family matters was possible due to education and economic independence in patrilineal society. In Rabha society women are decision taker. They also take leading role in marriage and property related issues. Both the tribes still follow their tradition. Yet modernization is gradually influencing the perception regarding gender in these societies.

Keywords: *Gender preference, gender role, decision making, cultural construct, matrilineal descent, patrilineal descent, The Mech, The Rabha*

Introduction

Gender "refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures" (UNESCO 2003). Gender is conceptualised differently by different types of people. It varies from one region to another and one community to another as well. Gender roles are universally sanctioned by every society. Gender role changes with the growing age. From the perspective of the functionalist, gender role is imbedded in the cultural practices of each human group. The roles are passed from one generation to the other. Scholars opined that constructivism and culturalism are mostly concerned with norms. The members of each society are actors in a social structure meaningfully executing their social roles (Farrell 2002). Gender roles are different in so called matrilineal societies as compared to the patrilineal societies. Descent in such societies is regulated by the social rules which in turn mould the gender role. Cross-cultural studies on gender role by various social scientists concentrated mainly on the specific techniques utilised by children

in different societies to learn the behaviour appropriate to their gender. Gender based task assignment is important in learning gender roles at young age (Condon and Stern 1993). There is a strong role of culture and socialization process in creating this difference. In one way or other gender role is assigned to the men and women by the society. In words of West and Zimmerman (1987) we are always "doing gender" as the roles are performed. In this way gender is also symbolic. The gender roles significantly contribute to human behaviour and interaction pattern. Every individual of the society carries this role structure in mind. The concept of 'matrilineal puzzle' is also important in this context as parenting is often influenced by descent rule and kinship system (Richards1950). The puzzle arises out of the conflict situation created by the matrilineal descent rule, where women have the control over property and the role of men in rearing children. Husband gains authority over wife and children in the family. At the same time mother's brother and brother get importance in the matrilineal society. For example, the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya follows matriliny and the women enjoy property rights, but they hardly have power to manage them (Nongbri1988 and Shangpliang 2012).On the contrary the Hindus traditionally believed that man is the provider of the seed and the woman is a passive recipient who only nurtures the seed within her for its owner. So, women could not inherit parental property (Dube 1986). There are a few studies related to the influence of culture on gender role in tribal societies.

Literature review:

Panoff's (1976) work on the Maenge community of East New Britain focused on the issue that although they follow matrilineal descent, but they give importance to fathers. *Malo Tumana* is a local term for band of brothers related by blood. Individuals related by *Malo Tumana* help each other in warfare and expeditions. Father takes the main responsibility of rearing children while mother involves themselves in household chores.

According to Barbara and Franke (1992) "Matrilineal Puzzle" is based on the following assumptions. 1) Women are always controlled by men; 2) Male roles are structurally central in all social systems; 3) The roles of father and husband are the most important social roles of men, these being transferred in matrilineal systems to the maternal uncle and brother, who take over the paternal and partnership functions; and 4) Men's control of women's sexual and reproductive potential is universal. They also argued that kinship structures determine and define people's positions and connections in pre-state societies. Women play a central role, while men are women defined. Father's importance lies in his function as controlling progenitor. The role of maternal uncle is rather important. Mother has the economic power.

Condon and Stern's (1993) study on the Inuit youths of Holman revealed that both male and female have well developed sense of gender identity and preference for same sex gender roles. Males have preferred status than females as they are less involved in household activities. Females were brought up to become mother and home makers. But traditional roles have now changed as the women are getting engaged in different economic activities.

Pakyntein (2000) noted that female child is highly preferred in the Khasi society. This preference is linked with Khasi customs and traditions. The reasons for preference are -

1. Continuation of lineage and handling property.

2. Matrilocal residence pattern of the younger daughter.
3. More security for Khasi men at wife's house.
4. Girls are loyal and responsible to the family.

Pakyntein's (2005) study on the gender preference in Khasi society gives the impression that the main reason for female preference was the tradition of matriliny. But it is also true that at present the married couples are more likely to prefer any child irrespective of gender.

VUBO's study (2005) focussed on the Ring group of Grass field Bantu who were at once patrilineal and matrilineal. The kinship structure of these people is stressed on the symmetric position of male and female in the society. For example, wife or women member of the same group has high status as the father, son and unmarried daughter's son. On the other hand, the daughter (married and unmarried), married daughter's daughter and son have low status. So, the status of individual moved from low to high and vice versa. The kinship weightage of the descent was maintained through marital exchange within the groups having matrilineal or patrilineal descent. The change from matriliny to patriliny has been observed as the change in nuclear family at the operational level.

Gneezy et. al. (2009) studied effect of culture on gender gap among the Masai of Tanzania who are patriarchal and the Khasi of North East India, a Matrilineal tribe. Gneezy suggested that the women compete more in Khasi society, while the case is reverse in case of the Masai. The study was done among the children aged 7 to 15 years. It was observed that the gender gap increases with age, especially at 15 years.

Andersen et.al. (2013) studied the gender competitiveness as an impact of socialization process among the Khasi, a matrilineal tribe and the Karbi, a patriarchal tribe of Meghalaya. They observed that while there is a decline in girl's competitiveness around puberty in the patriarchal society, there is actually slight increase in competitiveness for older girls in matrilineal society. There is no difference in competitive behaviour across gender and culture for younger children, but a significant gender competition gap emerges among the older children in patriarchal society, but not in matrilineal society.

Seitova and Utemyratov (2021) pointed out that ethnographers have studied different cultures across the world and find out that almost every society has specific gender approved behaviours for men and women followed rigidly. Gender stereotypes have significant impact on the socialization process. In most societies men are portrayed as strong, aggressive, rational, while women are just opposite being weak, passive and dependent. They differ in emotional sphere as well. Today mass media plays the crucial role in socialization process. They also noted that gender identity is formed in childhood and strengthened in adolescence, but may change later. Biological, social and psychological factors influence formation of gender identity.

The studies reflected that the consciousness regarding gender role develop from childhood and through socialization process. This process varies in matrilineal and patrilineal societies. There are a few matrilineal societies in India, viz. the Khasi, Garo, Rabha living in North Eastern states. There is lack of comparative studies on gender perspective among the matrilineal and patrilineal tribes of India and more specifically in West Bengal. With the notion that people having different social and cultural background must conceptualise gender in a different way, the present study was

done in a matrilineal and a patrilineal society. The Rabha are the matrilineal tribe residing in close proximity with the Mech or Bodo, a patrilineal tribe of West Bengal. The study was done on these two communities in Alipurduar district of the state.

Background of the studied area and population

The study was done in two separate villages inhabited by the Rabha and the Mech tribe. The village Andu Bana Basty was chiefly inhabited by the Rabha tribe. It was a forest village belonging to the Bania beat of Chilapata range. It was under Mathura Tea Garden Gram Panchayat of Alipurduar- I block. Another village Chandragaon was chiefly inhabited by the Mech or Bodo tribe situated in Kamakhyaguri - I Panchayat of Kumargram block.Andu Bana Basty was surrounded by forest, but Chandragaon was surrounded by agricultural fields. Naturally the Rabhas largely depended on the forest for their livelihood. The Mech people were mainly agriculturists, but occupational diversity was found in the studied area.

The Mech and the Rabha are enlisted Scheduled Tribes(ST) of West Bengal. They are living in Alipurduar district since many generations. The Mech are said to have migrated from Kamrupa and settled at the bank or river Mechi. This probably brought their name. Some scholars also believed that the term Mech came from Mleccha (a Sanskrit word meaning unclean). The settlements of the Mech in Tarai and Duars were reported by many British administrators and travellers (Sanyal, 1973). Their culture is more like the Hindus and they worship lord Shiva as the supreme deity. Many of them use the surname *Shaibo*. They have five or six main septs as stated by Sanyal, viz. *Sampramari, Narzinari, Basumatari, Mochari* and *Hajoari*. Another sept *Iswari* was found to use surname *Thakur* in the studied area.

The Rabhas are believed to have migrated to Assam from south east Tibet before Christ and then one of their groups crossed Brahmaputra River and entered western Duars. Scholars suggested that they were actually offshoot of the Koch. The term Rabha has many connotations. For example, in Koch dialect the word *morab* means 'man'. According to Dhananjay Rabha (1998), the word Rabha might have come from the words *ma* or *mra* meaning 'man' and *rab* meaning 'uneven' or 'rough' and *ha* means 'land' or 'earth', i.e. man of uneven place. He also noted that still there is a place in Tibet called Rabha in the Mango Valley (Rabha, 1998). The word *Raba* in Garo language means 'recalled' or 'called back' as the Rabha were called by the Garo king to teach them cultivation (Saha, 2006). The Rabha comprises of eight socio-cultural and linguistic groups such as — *1.The Pati, 2. The Rangdani, 3. The Maitari, 4. The Kochha (Koch), 5. The Dahari, 6. The Bitalia, 7. The Totla* and *8. The Hana or Shonga* (Raha, 1974). These groups are again sub divided into a number of exogamous clans (*Hausuk* in Rabha language). Different scholars and anthropologists suggested that both the tribes belong to great Bodo family of Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group and has Tibeto-Burman linguistic affiliation. The Mech prefer to call themselves Bodo in Duars.

The Mech people were probably settled in different parts of Alipurduar district during the dynasty of the Koch kings. The village Chandragaon was settled by some Chandra Singh, a Mech king or zamindar. The Rabha settlements under Chilapata range of Alipurduar district was established during British period. According to the villagers, Andu Bana Basty was established around 150 years ago. They got agricultural and homestead land from the forest department during settlement. As per 2011 Census the population of the Mech community in West Bengal was 41242 covering

0.78% of the total ST population of the state. There were 20851 males and 20391 females. The Rabhas constituted 0.53% of the total ST population of the state. Their population was 27820 including 14255 males and 13565 females.
During the survey in 2019, the total population of the Mech in Chadragaon was 366 including 177 females and 189 males and the sex ratio was 936.51. The total population of the Rabha in Andu Bana Basty was 306 including 159 females and 147 males. The sex ratio was 1081.63.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study were-

- To know the concept related to gender preference among the Mech and the Rabha tribes of West Bengal.
- To find out the role of women in decision making in both the societies.

The **purpose** of the present study is to know the outlook of the tribal people toward gender preference and gender role in decision making having different descent rule. This will reflect the status of women in a matrilineal and a patrilineal society.

Methodology

The present study was mainly based on primary data collected through field work among two indigenous communities residing in West Bengal, India. The comparative analysis method was applied to understand the gender issues in a matrilineal and a patrilineal society. The Rabha and the Mech community were selected respectively. Data related to gender preference was collected from 50 adult individuals from each community comprising of total 100 participants. Both the males and females were purposively selected on the basis of availability during study period. Only married men and women were interviewed.The age of the respondents varied from 20 to 80 years.
The study was based on qualitative data gathered through structured schedule, interview and observation methods. Data on gender preference and gender role was collected through structured schedules. The schedule contained basic information about the respondents like name, age, sex, education and occupation. The specific questions regarding gender preference and role of male and female in decision making related to family matters were also included. The technique of data collection was direct interview. Some group discussions were also done to understand the perception of men and women regarding gender preference and gender role. The information collected through schedules was quantified and tabulated using MS Excel. The qualitative data were documented and described systematically along with quantitative data.
Socio-economic indicators of the studied population were analysed by using the parameters like marital status, educational status and primary occupation of the studied population. Opinion regarding gender preference of the offspring was analysed on the basis of three indicators, viz. preference for girl child, preference for boy child and no preference. The reasons for preference were analysed separately for two tribes as the responses varied. It also varied in terms of offspring of the respondents which was separately tabulated. The data on decision making was comparatively

analysed by finding the answer to the question 'who takes decision in the family' regarding economic matters and family matters.

Findings

Socio-economic indicators of the studied population:

It has been observed that the Mech and the Rabha people were mainly agriculturists. Apart from agriculture, the Rabha of Andu Bana Basty depended on the forest for livelihood. The Mech people of Chandragaon were involved in different kinds of occupation like service, business etc. The respondents from these two villages were mostly females. Among the 50 respondents from Mech community 33 were female and 17 were male and among the Rabahs 26 were female and 24 were male. Altogether there were 59 female and 41 male respondents (Table No.1). From each community 44 respondents were found to be married (88%) and 6 (12%) were single parent during the time of survey. Single parent means widow/widower and divorced/ separated (Table No.2).

As per 2011 Census the literacy rate of the Mech people (74.24%) was higher compared to the Rabhas (61.30%) of West Bengal. Same trend was found among the studied population, although majority of the respondents in the studied areas were literate. People having higher education was more among the Mech (Tertiary level = 28%). There were graduates and post graduates also. Among the Rabhas, only 2 women were found to get tertiary level of education, highest level being class eleven (Table No.3).

Men and women from both the studied areas mostly depended on agriculture. Most of the respondents from the Rabha community were agriculturists (34.0%). The Rabhas had agricultural land beside the forest. They mainly cultivated paddy once in a year. They also had kitchen garden attached to their house. The Mech people cultivated paddy. Some of them practiced animal husbandry (6.0%) which included piggery and poultry business. Women respondents were mainly involved in household activities among both the communities. Three women and 4 men from the Mech community were service holders. There was no service holder among the Rabha respondents. The Rabhas collected minor forest products like edible fruits, roots, leave, honey, available fish at the river and fuel wood. Both men and women were involved in forest related activities. But the products collected were not sold at the market. These were part of their daily needs. One male respondent worked as forest guide and one female worked as forest labourer. There were shop keepers among Mech people. Besides labours and other professions like priest or driver was also found among both the communities. It could be apprehended that the Mech people got jobs as they had higher degrees in education (Table No.4).

The village settlement of the two communities widely varied as the Rabha village was a forest village and the Mech village was revenue village. Rabhas had a symbiotic relationship with the forest. The Mech respondents were educationally forward than the Rabhas as the Mech had more accessibility to higher education. There were service holders among the Mech. The Rabhas mainly depended on small scale agriculture.

Gender preference:

The concept of gender is typically a social-cultural construct varying contextually. While speaking of male and female gender preference for child always remained a matter of cultural significance.

The construction of this preference lies in the gender role. The role is assigned by the society itself. Comparing the context of a matrilineal and a patrilineal group is significant because traditionally they had a different outlook towards gender. The respondents belonging to Mech community mostly remained neutral while asked about child preference (74.0%). There was hardly any difference in case of male and female respondents. But situation slightly differed in case of the Rabha. They preferred female child (68.0%). Preference of male child was recorded to be same in both the communities (16%) (Table No. 5). The Rabha people of Andu Bana Basty still believed that women take care of the family (20.0%). The impact of matriliny is still relevant in choosing gender (34.0%). They believe that women are responsible for continuing lineage. Most of the families were matrilocal in the studied area (Table No. 6.ii). The change from matrilocal too patrilocal residence pattern has infiltrated in Rabha society. But preference of girl child is the reflection of their cultural construct. The Mech people on the other hand stressed on the importance of both male and female child in a family. The respondents who preferred male child reasoned for being with the parents as a patrilineal and patrilocal system. Only a few (10%) of them stated that girls are more caring than boys (Table No. 6.i).

The preference of children not only associated with the traditional system, but it is also linked with the life experience. Couples having male offspring could not ignore the importance of male child as found among the Mech (10%). The studied Mech people were mostly educated (Table No.3). Education among both male and female was behind a neutral outlook. Majority of the respondents had both male and female offspring. Except a few, most of them had same opinion regarding child preference (40%). To them both were important. In part of the Rabhas preference for girls was a common factor in every case as they admired their tradition and felt the importance of female in the family. Even then 30% of the respondents had only female offspring who preferred girl child (Table No. 7). As a system of matrilocal residence pattern girls stay at their parental home and looks after the parental property. This is one of the important reasons for female preference. Group discussion with the married couples of different age groups also reflected the same concept. Parents of a boy child also preferred girl child in case of the Rabha. The respondents from both the communities having no child mostly opined that both male and female are required to maintain a family so they will love to have child of any gender (Table No. 7). The community centric concept regarding gender preference is not an exception. Watson-Franke (1992) stated that kinship and descent status influences people's relationship in pre-state societies. She also accepted high value of women in matrilineal society. This notion is also applicable for the Rabha people and status of women is a gift of their social structure.

It has been observed the Rabhas consciously preferred girl child as they are matrilineal tribe, but the Mech people hardly had any preference. The main reason is traditional set up of the Rabhas, both in terms of their habitation and psycho-social make up. The Mech respondents had more exposure to outer world as they were educated. They accepted both girl and boy child to be equally important. Some respondents from both the communities believed that girl child is more caring than boy child and so girl child is preferred.

Decision making:

In most cases, a matrilineal society does not follow the rule of matriarchy. On the contrary patriliny follows patriarchy in most of the societies. Now the question is - whether decision making process is influenced by matriliny or patriliny? In some case off course, it is. During the present study two main issues were highlighted regarding decision making; economic matters and family matters. Economic matters included investment and property issues. The family matters include decision regarding children, aged, marriage, education and health. It is very interesting to find that in case of the Mech people, decision regarding economic matters (62.0%) and family matters (54.0%) were mostly taken by the male members of the family. Only 10% of the respondents said that both male and female members take decision on economic issues. According to most of the Rabha respondent decision regarding economic matters (76.0%) as well as family matters (62.0%) is mostly taken jointly. In some of the Mech family women are the authority for taking decision regarding economic issues (28.0%) and this could be the result of education and economic independence of the female. The opinion of the females regarding family matters (30%) is in respected of the Rabha society. Males taking decision alone for economic or family matters in Rabha society is rare (Table No. 8). It should be mentioned that traditionally men held the important position in both Mech and Rabha society, whether it is a religious head or political one. In case of family, kinship and marriage related issues the women are given priority in the Rabha society. The relatives from maternal side are always important among them as happens in most of the matrilineal societies. The situation is just opposite in case of the Mech. Descent rule is a contributing factor in shaping social norms. The difference in decision making process in two communities is reflected their outlook towards traditional system and conventional gender role. But recent changes in education and economy have somehow influenced the culture construct of the Mech people.

Generally, women are active workers in tribal societies. Along with household works the women in both the societies engage themselves in agriculture related activities and occasionally work as wage labourers. The Rabhas collect fuel wood and other minor forest products from the forest; sometimes they sell vegetables (product of kitchen garden) in the weekly market. Such kind of involvement empowers them to take decision in economic matters as well as family matters.

Conclusion:

There are only a few existing matrilineal societies in India. The Rabha is one of them. They are also changing very fast. But still the women are valued as a care giver, as a torch bearer of the lineage, as a partner in economy and off course family. The importance of women is reflected in their opinion regarding gender preference. They kept women ahead of men in every aspect. The female takes decision along with their male partners. This attitude made the Rabha women more empowered than the Mech women. Even the sex ratio (1081.63) gave impression of female primacy over male in Rabha society. The patrilineal Mech people have different opinion regarding child preference and gender role. The respondents from the Mech community were more educated compared to the Rabha. A few of the Mech women were service holders too. Reflection of this status was seen in case of their opinion regarding gender preference as well as decision making. Yet the power left in the hands of the male members. Gender preference often moved around the dilemma of parents regarding care giving. Staying with parents after marriage was a concern for the

parents which varied in patrilineal and matrilineal societies. Property inheritance is another aspect related with the status of men and women. In case of immovable property existence of son or daughter counted for parents whether they belong to patrilineal society or matrilineal society respectively. The status of women as viewed from the perspective of gender preference and role in decision making clearly suggest the matriliny plays a positive role in Rabha society for giving women a preferred status over men. The Mech women are also coming forward in decision making now-a-days. Although cultural values could not be ignored, nevertheless gender roles could be altered in any society if opportunities are given.

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Tables

(Source: Primary Data collected through field work)

Table No. 1: Community wise distribution of the respondents

Name of the community	Female	Male
Mech (n=50)	33 (66.0)	17 (34.0)
Rabha (n=50)	26 (52.0)	24 (48.0)
Total respondents (n=100)	59	41

Table No. 2: Marital status of the respondents

Community	Gender	Married	Divorced/separated/widow/widower
Mech (n=50)	Female	28 (56.0	5(10.0)
	Male	16(32.0)	1(2.0)
	Total	**44(88.0)**	**6(12.0)**
Rabha (n=50)	Female	23 (46.0)	3(6.0)
	Male	21(42.0)	3(6.0)
	Total	**44(88.0)**	**6(12.0)**

Table No. 3: Education of the respondents

	Mech (n=50)			**Rabha (n=50)**		
Level of education	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Illiterate	14	3	17(34.0)	10	13	23(46.0)

Primary (I-IV)	2	1	3(6.0)	1	1	2(4.0)
Secondary (V-X)	10	6	16(32.0)	13	10	23(46.0)
Tertiary (above X)	7	7	14(28.0)	2	0	2(4.0)
Total	33	17	50(100.0)	26	24	50(100.0)

Table No. 4: Primary occupation of the respondents

	Mech (n=50)			**Rabha (n=50)**		
Occupation	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Agriculture	2	3	5 (10.0)	1	16	17 (34.0)
Animal husbandry	2	1	3 (6.0)	-	-	-
Business and self employed	-	2	2 (4.0)	2	1	3 (6.0)
Forest related work	-	-	-	1	1	2 (4.0)
Household work	25	3	28 (56.0	21	2	23 (46.0)
Labour	-	1	1 (2.0)	-	1	1 (2.0)
Others	1	3	4 (8.0)	1	3	4 (8.0)
Service	3	4	7 (14.0)	-	-	-

Table No. 5: Child preference among the studied population

Community			
Mech (n=50)	**Female**	**Male**	**All**
Girl	4 (8.0)	1(2.0)	5(10.0
Boy	3 (6.0)	5(10.0)	8(16.0)
No preference	26 (52. 0)	11(22.0)	37(74.0)
Rabha (n=50)			
Girl	14(28.0)	20(40.0)	34(68.0)
Boy	5(10.0)	3(6.0)	8(16.0)
No preference	7(14.0)	1(2.0)	8(16.0)

6. i. **Reasons of preference among the Mech**

Reasons of preference among the Mech (n=50)	**Girl child**	**Boy child**	**No preference**
Both girls and boys are equally important	-	-	34 (68.0)
Boys stay with parents and continue the lineage	-	11 (22.0)	-
Daughters are more caring	5 (10.0)	-	-

6. ii. **Reasons of preference among the Rabha**

Reasons of preference among the Rabha (n=50)	**Girl**	**Boy**	**No preference**
Both girls and boys are required	-	-	15 (30.0)
Boys stay with parents now		8 (16.0)	-
Daughters are more caring and helpful	10 (20.0)	-	-
Traditional matrilineal system	17 (34.0)	-	-

Table No. 7: Gender preference based on offspring of the respondents

Community	**Preference of child**	**Having both male and female offspring**	**None**	**Only girl offspring**	**Only boy offspring**
Mech (n=50)	Girl	3(6.0)	-	2 (4.0)	-
	Boy	2 (4.0)	-	1 (2.0)	5 (10.0)
	No preference	20 (40.0)	3 (36.0)	3 (6.0)	11 (22.0)
Rabha (n=50)	Girl	9 (18.0)	-	15 (30.0)	10 (20.0)
	Boy	5 (10.0)	-	1 (2.0)	2 (4.0)
	No preference	4 (8.0)	1 (2.0)	2 (4.0)	1 (2.0)

Table No. 8: Decision making in the family

Community	**Who takes decision?**	**Economic matters**	**Family matters**
Mech (n=50)	Both	5 (10.0)	17 (34.0)
	Female	14 (28.0)	6 (12.0)
	Male	31 (62.0)	27 (54.0)
Rabha (n=50)	Both	38 (76.0)	31 (62.0)
	Female	6 (12.0)	15 (30.0)
	Male	6 (12.0)	4 (8.0)

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Teaching Learning Strategies in Higher Education

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ISBN No 978-93-5324-231-2 Price: 1990by Dr.Kandi Kamala edited book

The 21st century has brought along new challenges and opportunities for the country's educators and education planners. The challenges and issues before the education planners in this century lies in solving the problems of access and equity, quality, international dimensions, job-oriented education, and financing, among others Book has presented an analytical discussion on various issues confronting development of higher education in the country in her book Teaching Learning Strategies in Higher Education. The book is an attempt to put across 40 relevant themes for higher education in a simple but exhaustive way.

In the course of recent years, public cycles for research-quality appraisal have been presented or changed across Europe. Whatever the advantages of these frameworks may have brought to the association and nature of exploration the vast majority of them have contributed for a depreciating instructing and to a developing partition between the examination universes of the college and understudy learning. This investigation intends to add to a more extensive comprehension of the job of exploration for the nature of instructing and understudy learning and, through the assortment of good practices and proposals, contend for the coordination of these markers in research quality appraisal devices and assessment systems. The results demonstrate the need to examine the job of educating, staff proficient turn of events, evaluation rules and the effect of exploration on graduate/postgraduate understudy learning. Exploration evaluation frameworks should esteem instructing and understudy learning through research and, at an institutional level, arranging should uphold this connection through the improvement of methodologies dependent on a more extensive and setting driven origination of 'grant'.

The manner in which educating and research are coordinated inside divisions and organizations is likewise a significant factor to contemplate the stretch out of interior exertion to foster arrangements and systems to advance the association. At this level, the emphasis is set on the association of disciplines for instructing and for examination and its varieties in the manner relations are conceptualized and conveyed. These varieties are molded by the originations of the idea of information, the various types of teaching method and educational programs, the effect of expert associations and understudy interests on the substance and practices of the disciplines.

Many bright Indians choose to study abroad in part because they cannot get the quality that they want at home and a large majority does not return home. India has several competitive advantages. The widespread use of English, some innovative high tech and other companies that can absorb well-trained graduates and a large population of bright and energetic students, all contribute to India's potential. Yet, without careful attention to improving the universities, providing more adequate funding, expanding the top-quality sector of the system, eliminating corruption and ensuring that students who get access to higher education can successfully complete their studies, India's academic potential, and eventually its economic success, will be put in jeopardy. The book edited by Dr Kandi Kamala, chapters were edited intensively a wide variety of issues relating to higher education in India, I am sure, it will attract the wide attention of all those who are engaged in higher education development in the country. We hope that academic administrators, policy makers, education instructors and researches will find the insights of these studies of use for various purposes.

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   For example,

   a) adʒ ɔnek brʃʈi hoyeʧhe.
      today lot rain be-pr.pf.3rd
      'Today there was heavy shower.'
   b) boneder ʧhobi.
      sister-gen.pl. picture
      'Sisters' picture.'

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